

Roots of the *intifadah*: Zionist policy

The *determinants* are discussed through chapters on the heritage of the past, state and society, and international context, and a concluding chapter on famine, petrodollars and foreign debt. The *determiners* are discussed in intervening chapters on parties and participation, the military, revolution, and significantly, given its absence in other comparable volumes, women.

The picture of Third World politics that emerges is a complex one but common strands do appear. The spread of capitalism inevitably created new class formations, but communalism and patronage remain the dominant features of politics. Most rule is presidentially based, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. Parties have declined in influence and are generally used to support the bureaucratic apparatus of regimes. They still, however, maintain a legitimising role in some societies. Single party or military rule remains the norm. The new-found democracy in some Latin American countries can all too easily founder in the divide between the expectations raised by electoral promises and the dire situation of debt and dependency which limits the ability of governments to deliver the goods. This volume is particularly good on the interrelationship between political processes and global economic pressures. It has much sound, good sense and balanced judgement to suit the different requirements of a wide range of readers and is heartily recommended.

BARRY MUNSLOW

Centre of African Studies, University of Liverpool

THIRD WORLD

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JOHN WEEKS AND ANDREW ZIMBALIST

The failure of intervention in Panama: humiliation in the backyard

In the spring of 1988 the government of the United States suffered one of the worst foreign policy disasters in the history of its bilateral relations with Latin American countries. The Reagan administration, after initiating intervention to overthrow General Manuel Noriega of Panama and confidently predicting his imminent demise, found itself with no alternative but to abandon its campaign of government-busting and accept that the General would rule at his own pleasure, not that of the United States. The immediate political and diplomatic consequences of the survival of Noriega pale alongside its historical implications and long-term impact on US relations with Latin America, and the importance of the Noriega affair cannot be overstressed. From the point of view of Washington, it was a frustration and an embarrassment, particularly unwelcome in an election year. South of the Rio Grande, the implications were much more profound: the US government had marshalled its prestige and power to overthrow the ruler of a small country more vulnerable to US economic and political pressure than perhaps any other in the hemisphere,¹ and the project failed; indeed, it never had serious prospects of success. Setting aside cases in which governments came to power through armed struggle, this represented the first time that the US government had set itself the task of removing a regime in Latin America and failed.²

The purpose of this article is to analyse this historic case of Great Power defeat. The first step in the analysis, undertaken in section I, is to provide a brief historical background, intended to outline the development of bilateral relations between the USA and Panama, with emphasis on US strategic and economic interests. In section II we move on to identify the salient characteristics of Panama's internal politics.³

¹ This characterisation of Panama as uniquely vulnerable to US pressure will be justified below.

² The exceptions are, of course, Cuba and Nicaragua.

³ The subjects dealt with in these two sections are treated in more detail in two articles by one of the authors. See J Weeks, 'Panama: the roots of current political instability', *Third World Quarterly* 9 (3) 1986; and 'Panama', in A Lowenthal (ed), *The Latin American and Caribbean Contemporary Record Volume IV, 1986-1987*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988.

Then in section III we consider perhaps the most perplexing aspect of the Noriega affair: why did the Reagan administration turn against a leader who had by all accounts served the US government well for over fifteen years? In section IV we analyse the US campaign to oust the Panamanian leader and explain why it failed. Finally, section V draws conclusions from the entire episode.

I US-Panama relations and US interests

During the colonial period Panama came under the administration of New Granada (Colombia), though political, economic, and bureaucratic links were weak. After independence, the area became a province of Colombia in an unsettled relationship marked by insurrections and agitation for autonomy or complete independence.⁴ Although there was a genuinely indigenous movement for separation in the territory, it remains the case that the formal independence of Panama occurred as a consequence of conspiracy and armed intervention in 1903 by the administration of Theodore Roosevelt. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the contradiction between a genuine independence movement and the realisation of that independence as part of the construction of a US overseas empire at the turn of the century was a tragedy from which Panamanian national respect has yet to recover. A bare two weeks after the declaration of independence, US and Panamanian representatives concluded a treaty that granted the United States concessions far beyond anything required for the construction and operation of an interoceanic canal.⁵ In effect, the treaty created within Panama a US territory akin to a militarised settler-state, from which the native Panamanians were excluded except as menial and low-skilled workers.

Split in two by a strip of foreign territory, Panama of the Panam-

⁴ A history of Panamanian struggles for separation from Colombia during the nineteenth century is found in W LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: the crisis in historical perspective*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

⁵ The treaty was drafted in New York City by the US Secretary of State John Hay and the Frenchman Philippe Bunau-Varilla, a shareholder in the bankrupt French canal venture of the late nineteenth century. Trained as a mining engineer, Bunau-Varilla claimed in his autobiography to have organised and executed the Panamanian insurrection of 1903. At the moment of independence he was in New York, authorised as plenipotentiary of the New Panamanian government. In defiance of explicit instructions, he took it upon himself to sign the canal treaty for the Panamanian government. Former US Ambassador to Panama, Ambler Moss, writes that the treaty 'was never read by a single Panamanian before it was signed', and was signed by no Panamanian. A Moss Jr, 'The Panama Treaties: how an era ended', *Latin American Research Review* 21 (3) 1986. See P Bunau-Varilla, *Panama: the creation, destruction and resurrection*, New York: Robert M McBride, 1920.

anians had the character of a client state and until the Second World War existed within a legal-diplomatic framework equivalent to protectorate status. Economically, the country was overwhelmingly dependent upon the United States, not only because of US control of the canal, but also because a treaty of 1904 with the United States fixed the currency (the balboa) at permanent parity with the dollar. In consequence of this treaty, Panamanian governments can have no monetary policy as such; indeed, the balboa exists only as a unit of account and coins, with US Treasury notes (dollar bills) circulating as the medium of exchange. As we see later, this extraordinary monetary arrangement would loom large during the Reagan administration campaign to remove General Noriega.

When US interests in Panama are discussed, much emphasis is placed upon the strategic and economic importance of the canal. While such emphasis is appropriate (though a waning relevance as we show below), from the outset of the US presence in Panama the strategic importance of the Canal Zone itself was of overriding significance to policy-makers in Washington. Until the 1980s when Honduras permitted 'temporary' use of its territory for US military installations, only two countries in the hemisphere had allowed US bases: Cuba and Panama, both countries which the United States held in a semi-colonial relationship early this century. By comparison with the bases in the Canal Zone, the naval base in Cuba was of minor strategic importance, even before the Cuban Revolution limited its use. On a tactical level, the Canal Zone bases served important functions for all the major direct or surrogate US military interventions in the region—in Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961), the Dominican Republic (1964), Chile (1973), Grenada (1983), and more recently El Salvador and Nicaragua—as well as providing a base for electronic intelligence gathering. On the ideological level, until 1983 the United States operated in the zone the famous School of the Americas for the indoctrination and acculturation of Latin American military officers, many of whom became some of the more infamous dictators in the hemisphere (earning it the nickname 'School of the Tyrants').⁶

Over the last twenty years the economic and military significance of

⁶ As required by the Torrijos-Carter treaties, the school was moved from Panama to the United States. The alumni of the School of the Americas include Anastasio Somoza, Argentina's dictator Jorge Videla, and, interestingly enough, Manuel Noriega. This institution has been scrutinised in a number of studies: for example, see J Pearce, *Under the Eagle*, Nottingham: Bertrand Russell Press, 1981.

the interoceanic waterway has declined,⁷ while the importance of the military bases in the zone has increased.⁸ The significance of the canal has declined for two reasons.⁹ First, technical change in the transport industry has drastically reduced costs of transcontinental movement of freight by rail and road, so a smaller proportion of tonnage would go through the canal were the waterway to be modern and up-to-date for its own type of technology.¹⁰ But serious limitations of the canal itself have accelerated the shift to land transport and alternative sea routes. The waterway is much too narrow to accommodate large modern tankers; indeed, each year a larger proportion of the world's ships cannot traverse the isthmus. Perhaps more serious in the long run, there appears to be a deterioration in the fresh water supply of the waterway, an essential ingredient for a lock canal. This was one of the reasons why, in the early 1980s, a joint United States, Panamanian and Japanese commission initiated a study on the feasibility of a new canal, particularly the possibility of a sea-level canal.¹¹ For military purposes the canal is of little significance, since the major US warships are too large to use it.

On the other hand, the transisthmus oil pipeline constructed during the late 1970s is becoming more important. The pipeline lies outside the Canal Zone and is eighty-one miles long. It is jointly owned by a group in New York (the Chicago Bridge and Iron Corporation) and the Panamanian government. The pipeline carries approximately 600,000 to 800,000 barrels of Alaskan crude daily from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans, roughly 10 per cent of US crude output. The shut-down of the pipeline would throw West Coast oil markets into disarray. The transport alternatives—small vessels through the canal or larger ones around Cape Horn—are inadequate and not economically attractive. Insufficient oil storage capacity on the West Coast would cause an

⁷ '... Even the most dire possible event, closing of the canal, doesn't seem to overly [sic] worry too many people, including the US Navy'. Article by J Walcott in the *Wall Street Journal*, 24 March 1988.

⁸ A useful survey of the canal's importance written from a military perspective is found in 'Wasting asset—the United States reassessment of the Panama Canal', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 3 (2) 1980.

⁹ Some statistics on use of the canal are given in R Nyrop (ed), *Panama: a country study*, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1981, p 95. The number of ocean-going ships using the canal peaked in 1970, and the amount of cargo in tons peaked in 1974.

¹⁰ See 'Panama Canal's critical importance ebbs: alternatives reduce its military and commercial value', *Wall Street Journal*, 24 March 1988.

¹¹ A sea-level canal faces major technical difficulties, since the tides on the Pacific side are twenty feet higher than on the Caribbean side. Even were the present canal to be abandoned, it is open to question whether a new one would be constructed. A brief summary of preliminary findings of the joint study is reported in the *Latin American Monitor*, May 1988, p 535.

INTERVENTION IN PANAMA

excess supply with falling prices and/or reduced extraction. East Coast crude supplies would diminish and prices would rise. The pipeline is also a main source of Panamanian government revenues. Whereas the canal supplies some \$80 million annually to the Panamanian government, the pipeline pays an estimated \$70–85 million in taxes, profit share and fees.

Moreover, the military bases in the Canal Zone have assumed growing importance in the 1980s. As the 'Contragate' Congressional hearings in the Autumn of 1986 showed, the US Southern Command, located in the zone, played a major rôle in coordination, intelligence gathering, and delivery of supplies to the US-funded counter-revolutionaries attempting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. It also appears that the air bases and listening posts in the zone played a continuing and important rôle in the Salvadoran civil war.¹² It should be noted that official US policy and the provisions of the Torrijos-Carter treaties restrict the US military presence in the Canal Zone to the protection of the canal itself, so all of the aforementioned activities are in clear violation of bilateral treaty agreements. They have, however, rarely been challenged by the Panamanian civilian authorities, and even less by the leadership of the Defense Forces. Indeed, in January of 1985, 1986, and 1987, there were joint US–Panamanian military exercises in Panama proper that bore little relationship to canal security. These extramural military operations of the United States in Panama we shall raise again when considering why General Noriega fell from grace with Washington.

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that US strategic interests in Panama have changed substantially since the first half of the century. Until the 1960s, the primary US concern was the canal, as both an economic and military asset. Successive Panamanian governments, even quite compliant ones, had repeatedly petitioned for revision of the treaty of 1903, while successive US governments refused to make more than cosmetic changes (and relatively few of these).¹³ By the 1970s technological change had rendered the canal of waning importance, and the most important asset that the Canal Zone offered the government of the United States was the military bases. During the Carter administration the growing importance of the bases was not overtly

¹² This use of the Canal Zone is briefly mentioned in L. Rohter, 'America's blind eye', *New York Times Magazine*, 19 May 1988. It was also revealed in testimony by former Foreign Service Officer Francis J. McNeil before Senator John Kerry's Sub-committee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 4–5 April 1988.

¹³ For example, until the mid-1960s, the Panamanian flag could not be flown in the Canal Zone.

obvious, because Carter embarked upon no substantial military ventures in the hemisphere. The Reagan administration, however, proved to be much more aggressive, particularly in the Central American region, and the bases came into their own.

II Politics and nationalism in Panama

Nationalism in every country of Latin America is in part a reaction to the influence of the United States. However, in the case of Panama, the *essence* of nationalism is opposition to the influence of the United States, and for eighty years this influence has been symbolised by US control of the canal. Since 1903 the US government, through various agents and agencies, has been an active participant in the political life of Panama. To a degree the same is true for all Latin American countries, but the frequency and reach of US intervention in Panamanian politics has been singular.

Just as the canal has been a symbol of incomplete sovereignty for Panamanians, so for the government of the United States it has been a symbol of overwhelming 'national security' interests. From Panama's independence through to the 1960s the basic US policy goal with regard to local politics was that no government that would challenge for control of the canal should hold power. For this reason Arnulfo Arias Madrid (who died in his eighties in August 1988), perhaps the most popular politician in the history of Panama, was anathema to Washington. Because of his frequently anti-US rhetoric, Arias invariably suffered from a hostile treatment in the US press. Certainly at one time he manifested fascist sentiments and held bizarre views on many subjects, including overtly racist proclivities. The same can be said, however, of other Latin American politicians whom US policy-makers have embraced as allies. The fundamental objection to Arias by US governments was not his fascism or racism, but that he promised to effect a radical revision of the canal treaties.

Despite his idiosyncrasies, Arias had marshalled the nationalist frustrations of Panamanians around the canal issue for over fifty years. He was first elected president of Panama in 1940 and several times subsequently, the last occasion being in 1984 when he was defrauded of victory and Ardito Barletta declared winner.¹⁴ Indeed, at the time of his death he was the favourite to win the presidential election scheduled

¹⁴ Arias was formally declared the winner in three elections, 1940, 1948, and 1968. Most observers agree that he also won the elections of 1964 and 1984, but was denied victory by electoral fraud.

for 1989. The decades-long hold of Arias over the Panamanian electorate, rivalling even that of the late Haya de la Torre of Peru with regard to his countrymen,¹⁵ is explained largely by two factors, both of great importance in understanding the failure of the US campaign to overthrow Noriega. First, his popular base lay in the lower classes. This political alliance with the nationalist masses went against the narrow structure of Panamanian politics, for virtually all governments from 1903 until the coup of 1968 had been controlled by a white commercial aristocratic elite (except for the brief tenure of Arias himself).¹⁶ Arias's political movement brought expression to the class and ethnic divisions in Panama, with the politicians of the conservative, upper class parties never able to marshal mass support and forced to rely on fraud and coups to keep him from power. Indeed, it is ironic that the coup of 1968 which broke the upper class monopoly on political power was carried out against Arias himself. Second, and closely related to the first, Arias constructed his career around the canal issue, thus symbolising the nationalist aspirations of the Panamanian masses. This combination, a nationalist platform and a lower class popular base, had the effect of identifying the upper classes and their political parties with collaboration with the United States. To intensify the polarisation of political life, the Panamanian upper classes are for the most part of European descent, while the ethnic composition of the lower classes is much more diverse. Therefore, latent in the nationalist fervour of the Panamanian masses is a resentment against an aristocracy identified as collaborationist and European-racist. This is not to say that there have been no wealthy patriotic and nationalist Panamanians, but as a consequence of the Arias movement their role has been obscured.

Throughout the history of Panama as a nominally independent nation, the government of the United States has aligned itself with the conservative, European elite. Until 1968 this alliance coincided with a narrow interpretation of how to maintain US control over the canal; that is, by preventing Arias from becoming president. In 1941, the US government actively cooperated in the overthrow of Arias after his first election victory, and encouraged his ouster in 1948. During the 1950s

¹⁵ Comparisons between the two men are irresistible. Both were charismatic and captured the imagination of the lower classes in their countries for half a century, and both were for most of their careers viewed as near-demons by the military and the US embassy (though neither held very radical views except perhaps early in their careers).

¹⁶ The character of Panamanian politics before Torrijos is treated in R Looney, *The Economic Development of Panama*, New York: Praeger, 1976. See also LaFeber, *The Panama Canal* and G Priestley, *Military Government and Popular Participation in Panama*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1986.

Arias took no part in active politics, but when he ran again and lost in fraudulent elections in 1964, US policy-makers registered no protest and quickly recognised the new president. In 1968 the Johnson administration was obviously pleased with the military coup that overthrew Arias after barely a week in office. Washington's support of the 1968 coup is particularly ironic in retrospect, since the impetus for the coup was an attempt by Arias to neutralise the role of the National Guard in Panamanian politics. More recently, the United States was quick to endorse the winner of the fraudulent election of 1984, with the Secretary of State, George Shultz, attending the investiture of the new president.¹⁷

The most interesting and seemingly paradoxical aspect of the objection to Arias is that his political programme was so moderate. Similarly, the antagonisms that he engendered in Washington and among the Panamanian upper class appeared disproportionate to the nature of that programme. In effect, the US government continued to treat Panama as a client state, unwilling to tolerate independent political developments or politicians. For the purpose of understanding the Noriega affair, the importance of Arias's career is that it epitomises the class and ethnic polarisation of the country with respect to Panamanian nationalism. Because of the canal issue and the close commercial links between the United States and Panama, the upper classes in Panama, justly or unjustly, had lost claim to the banner of nationalism in the eyes of the majority of Panamanians.

III Why Noriega fell from grace

Of the many imponderables associated with the crisis in relations between the governments of Panama and the United States during 1968-88, the most perplexing is why it occurred at all. Yet answering this question is the key to understanding the Noriega affair. It is generally recognised, indeed common knowledge, that Noriega enjoyed close relations with agencies of the United States government, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, but also the US military. The role of Noriega as a US informant and conduit for information began in the late 1960s, when he began serving as Director of Intelligence for the Panamanian National Guard, and continued uninterrupted until quite

¹⁷ The US hostility to Arias is discussed in R. Millet, 'Looking beyond Noriega', *Foreign Policy* (71) Summer 1988. The election of 1984 is treated in detail in Weeks, 'Panama: the roots of current political instability'.

recently, despite allegedly strong evidence of his involvement in illegal activities associated with the drug trade.¹⁸ Circumstantial evidence, including the close cooperation between the US and Panamanian militaries since Noriega took effective power,¹⁹ would suggest that the allegations of his links to US civilian and military intelligence agencies are not exaggerated.

Given that Noriega seems to have served the interests of the US government in a satisfactory manner for so long, one needs to explain why the Reagan administration undertook a campaign to remove him from power. Most commentators evade this question, going directly to an analysis of the destabilisation campaign itself.²⁰ Those explanations that are offered are not very satisfactory. First, there is the argument that US policy towards Noriega changed because of the discovery of his alleged criminal activities, including trafficking in drugs, murder, commerce in prohibited technology goods with Cuba, supplying arms to leftist guerrilla groups, and election-rigging. This explanation is unsatisfactory on two counts. Since these are all activities engaged in by some other heads of governments in Latin America and elsewhere, it would be necessary to explain why Noriega was singled out for punishment. Further, it is generally agreed (see above) that the US government was aware of these accusations long before it chose to rid Panama of Noriega: the drug charge apparently had been known almost twenty years previously; the election-rigging occurred in 1984 and the US embassy in Panama was well aware of it;²¹ the murder in question (of Hugo Spadafora) happened in 1985, when there were immediate accusations of involvement by the military.²² Knowledge of Noriega's crimes at best provides a *prima facie* motive as to why the United States might have intervened in Panama any time after 1983.

¹⁸ For example, L. Rohter writes, '... there is strong evidence that the Panamanian military began dealing in drugs almost as soon as it seized power in 1968 and that the United States knew of that involvement much sooner than is supposed.' *New York Times Magazine*, 19 May 1988, p. 26. Apparently J E Ingersoll, director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs of the State Department in the Nixon administration, told Seymour Hersh (then with the *New York Times*) in 1986 that his agency had 'hard information' in the early 1970s that Noriega was in the drug trade.

¹⁹ Here we refer to points mentioned before: tolerance by the Panamanian government for US military activities in the Canal Zone which violated the spirit if not the letter of the Torrijos-Carter treaties, and the joint military exercises in January 1985, 1986, and 1987.

²⁰ For example, Millet treats this issue not at all.

²¹ Many writers maintain that soon after the polling the United States had clear evidence that the election was less than honest. See Millet, 'Looking beyond Noriega', *Este País me's a m'es* (Panama) Enero de 1988, and R A Calderon, 'Panama: disaster or democracy?' *Foreign Affairs* 62 (2) Winter 1987-88.

²² *Central American Report*, 31 January 1986.

If one accepts the explanation that Noriega's crimes were responsible for US intervention, it is necessary to pursue further a sub-set of this explanation, that intervention was motivated by Noriega's drug dealings. If the drugs allegations are true, they were true in 1983 when he took control of the military (and he would at that point have been considerably easier to remove than in 1987-88). However, as Senator Paul Simon pointed out on 28 April 1988 to the US Senate, 'We tolerated [Noriega's] drug dealings because he was helping the Contras.'²³ And according to the February 1988 congressional testimony of José Blandón (Noriega's erstwhile consul in New York), Noriega received a monthly stipend from the CIA. In return (among other services) he allowed the training of Contra soldiers in Panama at the request of Oliver North. The General also allowed North and North's associate Secord to establish three dummy corporations in Panama as fronts for Contra funding. And, according to the congressional testimony of Francis J MacNeil (April 1988), Noriega proposed to North that he, Noriega, run sabotage missions against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Little wonder, then, that when Senator Jesse Helms introduced legislation in 1985 to cut off economic aid to Panama, the CIA director William Casey urged the Senator to withdraw it. According to a Senate source, 'Casey was very adamant about it. He said Noriega was doing things for the US that Helms didn't know about'.²⁴ Noriega's drug dealings did not present an insurmountable obstacle to cooperation with him in the view of US officials. In 1986, after briefing the Attorney-General, Edwin Meese, about his investigation into drug-trafficking in Central America, US Department of Justice Attorney for Miami, Jeffrey Kellner, was told by Meese to sidetrack his inquiry for political reasons.²⁵

Other actions of the US government itself suggest that it was not intensely concerned about the General's drug-related activities until after it had decided he had to go. As surprising as it may seem in retrospect, in May 1986 John Lawn, director of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, sent a letter to Noriega expressing 'deep appreciation for [your] vigorous anti-drug policy'.²⁶ And in May 1987 (a year after the mid-1986 newspaper revelations about Noriega's drug involvement) Meese, the highest-ranking law enforcement official in the United States, congratulated the Panamanian government on its cooperation

²³ *US Congressional Record*, 25 April 1988, p S4687.

²⁴ N Cooper et al, 'Drugs, money and death', *Newsweek*, 15 February 1988, reprinted in the *US Congressional Record*, 9 February 1988, p E219.

²⁵ *US Congressional Record*, 26 February 1988, p S1583.

²⁶ Cooper, *Newsweek*, 15 February 1988, later read into the *US Congressional Record*.

in joint US-Panamanian anti-drug activities. One can presume that no such cooperation would have been possible without Noriega's agreement. Further, the US Justice Department was not the only law enforcement agency complimenting Panama: only the previous month, the international police organization, INTERPOL, presented Noriega with its medal of honour for his contribution to the struggle against terrorism and drug-trafficking.²⁷ However, according to press reports, in June or July of 1987 the Reagan administration apparently reached the decision to force Noriega out.²⁸ It seems unusual to commend a government for aiding in drug enforcement one month, then to decide to overthrow that same government for drug-trafficking the next month.

An argument made by some Latin American nationalists is that the decision to move against Noriega was part of a larger campaign to prevent the canal from passing out of US control, with the timing of the move prompted by the Panamanian presidential election scheduled for 1989. By this argument, the US government feared the victory of a president antagonistic to its interests in a Noriega-managed election. To avoid this outcome, the United States acted to remove the General in order to clear the way for a Panamanian government which would permit revision of the Torrijos-Carter treaties, in order to allow US bases to remain in the country and US control over the canal after the year 2000. While this explanation was ridiculed in the US press, it is not completely groundless. Though the 1977 treaties clearly pass the canal unconditionally to Panama, on 23 October 1986 Arthur Davis, US ambassador, delivered a speech in Panama in which he tied the transfer of the canal to domestic political changes: 'Fully functioning democratic institutions in Panama are the best guarantee to Americans and Panamanians alike for success in the turnover of the canal to Panama.' While not precisely saying that his government would not transfer the canal to a Panamanian regime of which it disapproved, this was the interpretation placed upon the statement in Panama, explicitly so by the head of the conservative Christian Democratic Party.²⁹ A nationalist did not have to be paranoid to conclude that a plot to block transfer of the canal was afoot.³⁰

²⁷ *Central American Report*, 27 April 1987 and 22 May 1987.

²⁸ *Central American Report*, 6 June 1987, and *Latin American Monitor*, June 1987.

²⁹ Ricardo Arias Calderon, president of the Christian Democratic Party, wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, 'Ambassador Davis clearly related the future of the canal to democratization'. Arias Calderon, 'Panama: disaster or democracy?', p 342.

³⁰ Two articles in the *Miami Herald*, November 14 and 27, reported that the speech by Davis was part of a conscious US campaign to link the transfer of the canal to political changes within Panama.

Notwithstanding this extraordinary statement by Davis, it is difficult to believe that the campaign to overthrow Noriega was motivated by a US hope of a major revision of the canal treaties. Certainly there are US politicians who would cancel the treaties and maintain US control over the canal indefinitely if this were possible. Ronald Reagan fervently attacked the Torrijos-Carter treaties during the presidential campaign of 1980, and politicians of similar views could be found in the White House and Congress. However, it is doubtful if any but those on the extreme right and totally ignorant of Panamanian politics could believe that any Panamanian government would not demand the transfer of control of the canal in 2000 as had been agreed by treaty. No government could do so and survive, for it would contradict the central current of Panamanian politics for the last sixty years. Were the US administration seriously to seek an extension of control over the canal, it would require military occupation and a quisling government in the strict sense of that term. While it is not beyond the realm of possibility that some White House advisers recommend such a policy, it is difficult to believe that it would have been the primary motivation of policy. More credible would be the argument that the US administration might seek a formula involving the essence of control without the form, such as the suggestion that the canal be 'privatised' under nominal Panamanian oversight.³¹ But given the obsolescence of the canal, and the slim and sometimes negative operating profit margins, the proposal would be unlikely to attract many interested capitalists.

A third and more compelling argument is that the real motivation for overthrowing Noriega is to guarantee access to military bases after 2000 (when the treaties require their removal). The argument is credible because, as argued in section I, the military bases now represent the most important US asset in Panama. However, if this were the goal, antagonising Noriega would not be the best means to achieve it. Until the recent breakdown of relations, Noriega had moved the Panamanian government and the Defense Forces away from the progressive foreign policy of Torrijos. He had also cooperated with US ventures in the region, and had risked popular disgruntlement by permitting major US military exercises in the country for three consecutive years.³²

Having argued against these three explanations, we now present our

³¹ This possibility was alleged to be a US contingency plan by Panamanian sociologist Guillermo Castro, reported in the *Central American Report*, 4 March 1988.

³² Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of these exercises was that they coincided with the anniversaries of the 1964 demonstration against US occupation of the Canal Zone, when twenty-one Panamanians were shot by US soldiers.

own interpretation of US motivations for the campaign against Noriega, an interpretation which has not gone unnoted by others but has been insufficiently elaborated. The discussion is aided by an accompanying table which summarises the relevant events from September 1985 to February 1988 (see page 16). The first aspect of our explanation involves the key issue of succession within the Panamanian Defense Forces. Our point of departure is that given the predilection of the Reagan administration for interventionist tactics and Noriega's chequered career, it is not necessary to explain why the White House would seek to remove the General; it is only necessary to explain what prompted it to do so at a particular time. As stated, General Noriega was a serious embarrassment to the Reagan administration: he had overthrown a president whose fraudulent election had been endorsed by the United States; revelations about his allegedly criminal activities had provoked an outcry in Congress, which could (and did) become an election issue in 1988; and he began to balk at actively supporting US policy in Central America (a point taken up below). From this point of view, the question becomes, why did the Reagan administration not move against Noriega sooner? The answer is that the US government feared that if Noriega were removed, he might be replaced by Roberto Diaz Herrera (second in command of the Defense Forces until June 1987), perceived by the White House to be a 'leftist'.³³

A look at the table provides *prima facie* support for our argument. During 1986 and the first half of 1987, US policy towards Noriega was ambivalent, indicating a strategy of seeking to pressurise and influence rather than remove him. While there were strong criticisms, there were also episodes of close cooperation (for example, the military exercises). Then with the dismissal of Diaz Herrera from the Defense Forces, US policy took a dramatic turn.³⁴ In a recent article Millet has argued that Noriega 'made a major mistake' in removing Diaz Herrera.³⁵ Indeed he did, but not primarily for the reason Millet suggests, namely, the inflammatory accusations issued by the ousted Colonel. The removal of Diaz Herrera represented a miscalculation on Noriega's part because it removed the threat that he might be replaced by a 'leftist', freeing the Reagan administration to follow its interventionist instincts.

³³ See *This Week in Central America*, (26) 14 July 1986, in which are summarised reports that the Reagan administration considered but rejected plans to pressurise Noriega out, for fear that he would be replaced by Diaz Herrera (who was the first cousin of Torrijos).

³⁴ 'Informed sources said US contingency planning has begun for facilitating departure of Noriega, including the question of where he might go into exile', *Washington Post*, 23 July 1987.

³⁵ Millet, 'Looking beyond Noriega', p 52.

Presented with the apparent opportunity to rid itself of Noriega, the Reagan administration seems to have been motivated to do so mostly by its obsession with pursuing its Contra strategy against Nicaragua.³⁶ While the General had been cooperative to a degree, the unravelling of that strategy required a more active involvement which a post-Noriega regime might have supplied. In particular, there is some evidence that the White House saw in Eric Arturo Delvalle, Noriega's puppet president, a more receptive audience for its policy toward Nicaragua. In any event, the White House had for some time been pressurising Noriega to take a more active role in support of the Contras, the most publicised episode being a December 1985 visit to Panama and a meeting with the General by Admiral John Poindexter, who would later be indicted for his part in the Contra-Iran arms scandal. Reports at the time suggested that Poindexter had, among other things, sought Noriega's agreement to train Contras in Panama. Subsequently it would be reported that Poindexter was one of the unnamed sources providing the revelations about Noriega's crimes to US journalists in mid-1986, leaks designed to persuade the General towards a more pro-Contra policy.

By mid-1987 events had come together, thus prompting the Reagan administration to act against Noriega. The dreaded Diaz Herrera was out of the line of succession for the command of the Defense Forces, and matters were going badly for the Contras both in Nicaragua and in Washington. Opposition in Congress to Contra aid had hardened; Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua, made a dramatic trip to Washington that proved a diplomatic coup (he met the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Jim Wright); and the Central American presidents were moving towards a regional peace solution, which would result in the signing of a joint accord in August 1987 (the Arias Plan). Thus, pressure was mounting for a peaceful solution to the Nicaraguan conflict which would precipitate the disintegration of the Contras and formal acceptance of the Sandinista government by its neighbours: an undesirable outcome from the point of view of the Reagan administration.

Two complementary explanations for the timing of the switch in US policy towards Noriega seem plausible. First, there are indications that Noriega was hesitant to honour earlier 'commitments' to help the

³⁶ 'Strong suspicions that the main motive for the Reagan administration's [attack on Noriega] had to do with the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries have been fully confirmed by Alfonso Chardy of the *Miami Herald*...' *Central American Report*, 12 June 1987, referring to an article in that newspaper of 10 May 1987, which related the criticisms of Noriega to US pressure on several Latin American countries to weaken the Contadora peace process.

Contras, as mentioned above. Second, one consistent theme in US policy toward Panama has been concern for political stability (albeit by the US definition). While Diaz Herrera's June 1987 denunciations did not reveal any new information about Noriega, they were startling because they came from within the power structure.³⁷ The inferred breaking of the ranks led quickly to an outburst of popular protest, perhaps perceived as detrimental to US interests by policy-makers in Washington.³⁸

In a sentence, our argument is that the US government moved against Noriega as part of its plan to rid Central America of a leftist regime in Nicaragua, and did not do so sooner largely because it feared creating such a regime in Panama if it did so. While this hypothesis cannot be conclusively established, it is consistent with other circumstantial evidence. At the height of the campaign against Noriega, US officials made it clear that the goal was *not* to dismantle or even bring reform of the Defense Forces. Indeed, on 3 March 1988, with the economic warfare raging, Marlin Fitzwater, US presidential spokesman, said that the Reagan administration envisioned the military 'playing an important and constructive role under a civilian regime'.³⁹ For his part, Secretary of State, George Shultz, almost waxed eloquent on the virtues of the Defense Forces, referring to the need to 'maintain its integrity' (perhaps an unfortunate choice of words), and describing the Panamanian military as 'a strong and honorable force that has a significant and proper role to play and we want to see it play that role ... we're for the Panamanian people, and *for that matter for the Panama Defense Force*'.⁴⁰ This is a strange position to take if the goal were the elimination of the drug trade, since there was general agreement that the Panamanian military was riddled with corruption, particularly within its leadership.⁴¹ On this issue the Reagan administration came into conflict with the Panamanian opposition which it professed to support, rejecting the opposition's demand that a list of officers be retired along with

³⁷ See discussion in G S Bourbon, 'Panama fallen among thieves', *Harpers Magazine*, December 1987.

³⁸ Millet writes: 'Diaz Herrera's statements unleashed a storm of protest. Business and civic leaders formed the National Civic Crusade and instituted a series of strikes and demonstrations designed to force Noriega from power.' Millet, 'Looking beyond Noriega', p. 53.

³⁹ *New York Times*, 3 March 1988.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, 12 March 1988. (Emphasis added.) In the same vein and more specific, Charles Redman, State Department spokesman said, 'we did not suggest the removal of other officers [than Noriega] ...' *New York Times*, 22 March 1988.

⁴¹ To quote the *New York Times*, '... it is odd to hear Administration officials sing the military's praises when it is layered with General Noriega's cronies who have shared in the profits from drug-trafficking and other criminal activities', 27 March 1988.

Noriega.⁴² This tolerance for a military command described by a member of the US Southern Command as 'a band of thugs and thieves'⁴³ is inexplicable if the primary concern of the Reagan administration were to end drug-trafficking or protect the security of the canal. It is, however, perfectly consistent with a policy of fostering a more reliable and conservative commander of the Defense Forces who would form a government more compliant with US regional strategy. The justification given by the Reagan administration for turning a blind eye to the activities of the other high-ranking officers is that it was part of a policy to provoke a split in the ranks of the Defense Forces. No doubt this was the motivation, and it helped to undermine any policy for eventual civilian rule should Noriega have fallen.

Chronology of US-Panamanian relations September 1985–April 1988

Date	Event
September 1985	Ardito Barletta removed from presidency and replaced by Delvalle.
December	US presidential adviser Poindexter meets Noriega in Panama, allegedly to urge greater support for Contras which Noriega refuses.
January 1986	Joint US Panamanian military exercises.
February	US State Department issues annual human rights report which strongly condemns Panama for first time under Reagan administration.
March	US Ambassador Davis condemns Panamanian human rights violations in closed Senate hearing.
May	Contadora group meets in Panama, but Devalle does not attend.
June	Panamanian officials detain Danish ship <i>Pia Vesta</i> , allegedly carrying arms to Nicaraguan government.
June July	Allegations of Noriega's crimes appear in US press prompted by articles by Seymour Hersch. US press reports that Reagan administration decided not to urge Noriega's removal for fear he would be replaced by

⁴² The opposition leaders presented a list of high-ranking officers whose removal they saw as essential to reforming and depoliticising the Defense Forces, but the Reagan administration refused to accept this demand as part of its negotiations with Noriega. *New York Times*, 22 March 1988.

⁴³ *New York Times Magazine*, 19 May 1988.

INTERVENTION IN PANAMA

	'left-leaning' Roberto Diaz Herrera, second in command of Defense Forces (and cousin of Torrijos).
December	Panamanian legislature alters banking secrecy laws, facilitating US Operation Pisces several months later. <i>La Prensa</i> (Panama) reports attempted coup against Noriega; later reports identify Diaz Herrera as leader of coup.
January 1987	Joint US-Panamanian military exercises, called 'Kindle Liberty'.
April	Annual US State Department report on human rights again strongly critical of Noriega.
May	Meese congratulates Panamanian government on drug enforcement measures. US Southern Command returned to Panama after several years located within the United States.
June	Diaz Herrera removed from Defense Forces by Noriega; Diaz Herrera makes series of dramatic accusations against Noriega including complicity with CIA in death of Torrijos. Reagan administration reverses its policy and initiates campaign to overthrow Noriega.
July	Diaz Herrera arrested and held incognito. Demonstrators, allegedly government-inspired, attack US embassy in Panama. US suspends economic aid.
August	White House sends William Walker to Panama in first of many attempts to negotiate the self-exile of Noriega.
December	US suspends Panama's sugar quota.
January 1988	Noriega rejects 'Blandón Plan' for his graceful exit from Panama.
February	Noriega indicted by Florida grand jury for drug offences. Delvalle meets Elliot Abrams in Miami and a few days later orders Noriega to resign. Panamanian legislature removes Delvalle and invests Manuel Solís Palma with the presidency.
March	US economic intervention intensifies, with 'cash strangulation' strategy.

IV Noriega survives US pressure

On 27 March 1988 the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, Elliot Abrams, in a flush of anticipated victory, announced

that General Noriega was 'hanging on to power by his fingertips'.⁴⁴ If true, then the General's fingers proved to be strong indeed, and, like Samuel Clements he could have protested that notices of his demise were premature. But Abrams was not alone in anticipating the quick capitulation of that General, for this view was widely held. What is surprising is not that Noriega survived, but that opinion was almost unanimous that he would not, when even superficial reflection suggested that the US campaign would be ineffective.⁴⁵

US intervention against Noriega was doomed to failure for several reasons obvious to anyone familiar with Panama's history, political context and economy. In order to indicate how obvious these were, it is necessary first to summarise what must have been the Reagan administration scenario for ousting Noriega: US economic and political pressure would provoke unrest and generate substantial costs, provoking the leadership of the Defense Forces to break with Noriega and send him packing. This simple chain of events involves a number of questionable assumptions which analysts (and apparently the Reagan administration) accepted uncritically. First, while the US government was capable of imposing substantial social and economic costs upon the Panamanian population, it was not at all clear that these costs would be borne by Noriega and the Defense Forces, nor that they would accrue in a manner that would directly or indirectly weaken him. In other words, it should have been calculated whether the pressure of intervention would be more likely to weaken Noriega or his opponents. Second, the success of the campaign was based upon a presumption that the unrest that would result from it would automatically lead the high command of the Defense Forces to conclude that the removal of Noriega would defuse that unrest rather than intensify it, a dubious proposition at best. In short, the Reagan administration assumed that the Panamanian military leaders would accept the US solution to the US-created crisis, rather than some other solution more consistent with the goals of the Defense Forces as an institution. This presumption was a serious error of great power arrogance, for it overlooked the possibility that the leadership of the Defense Forces might consider their

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, 28 March 1988. Abrams's view was shared by many. The usually astute *Central American Report* seemed to anticipate the fall of Noriega in its issue of 25 March 1988, and Millet's *Foreign Policy* article is written as if the exile of Noriega in April and May of 1988 were only a question of when and to where.

⁴⁵ Lest we be accused of twenty-twenty hindsight, it can be noted that Weeks is on record as predicting the survival of Noriega. In a programme taped for Vermont Public Television on 28 March, he recklessly stated that Noriega 'would not fall in 1988'. By the time this article is published that prediction will be vindicated or rendered foolish.

authority and prestige (or ability to intimidate) seriously undermined by an overt capitulation to the United States. In this regard it must be kept in mind that, whether Noriega was liked or disliked by his fellow officers, to remove him in response to US pressure would be to admit that the Panamanian military lacked the power and resolve to govern itself.

More fundamental than the role in Noriega's overthrow was the role of the civilian opposition, on which the Reagan administration placed such great hopes. Yet the entire history of Panamanian politics indicated that the civilian opposition could not form a coherent and cohesive movement to challenge Noriega's rule. From the outset the civilian opposition was led by representatives from the upper and middle classes, representing parties for the most part opposed to the reforms of the Torrijos period, reforms that had favoured, at least in form, the working class and peasantry. If the National Civic Crusade, the umbrella group which organised the demonstrations during July and August 1987 in protest against Diaz Herrera's denunciations and arrest, did not appreciate their tenuous links to the Panamanian masses,⁴⁶ Noriega certainly did.⁴⁷

Isolated from the masses throughout Panamanian history, the upper class elite had little hope of organising and directing a mass movement. For sixty-five years, from independence to the nationalist coup of 1968, a small group of upper class families had ruled Panama with little regard to the rights of labour or the peasantry. The coup of 1968 took economic power from the traditional elite, and during the 1970s Torrijos sought to consolidate a populist movement that would prevent the

⁴⁶ Arias Calderon, president of the Christian Democratic Party, wrote in *Foreign Affairs*:

General Noriega has attempted to present the Civic Crusade in terms of class struggle and even in terms of race struggle, as a fight of the white middle and upper classes versus the black lower classes. This portrayal was so contrary to the experience of participants and observers and so contrary to the grain of Panama's mixed and pluralistic society that it generated a strong backlash. (Arias Calderon, 'Panama: disaster or democracy?' p 342.)

Unfortunately for the Civic Crusade, Noriega's accusations conformed to the experience of lower class Panamanians who before Torrijos had been ruled by governments in which the presidency was shifted among upper class white families.

⁴⁷ The quotation from Arias Calderon (previous footnote) is to be contrasted with one from Millet:

That much of the National Civic Crusade's leadership is drawn from upper- and middle-class white families appears to give some credibility to government charges that the *rabi-blancos* [white-tails] ... are encouraging disturbances in a bid to restore their former control of Panamanian politics.

While supportive of the overthrow of Noriega (if done properly), Millet concedes that the class and ethnic character of the opposition leadership is a problem:

Despite the deep race and class divisions in Panamanian society, the constant identification of the opposition with white elite families has won few supports for the government. Still, it does help keep many Panamanians on the sidelines, alienated and apathetic. (Millet, 'Looking beyond Noriega', p 54.)

return of rule by the old oligarchy. Since the National Civic Crusade was led by politicians from the same families which had dominated Panama for so long, it could easily appear to the Panamanian lower classes as an attempt by the old elite to recapture power, and to recapture power with the overt support of the US government. Indeed, at one level it was precisely that which undermined the efforts of the Civic Crusade from the beginning.

What perhaps misled the Reagan administration with regard to the popular support for the civilian opposition were the events of July and August 1987. Following the denunciation of Noriega by Diaz Herrera, there occurred a series of mass demonstrations against the government that drew allegiance from all classes. While these demonstrations were called by the Civic Crusade, the widespread acclaim did not necessarily reflect support for the conservative upper class opposition. Two motivations not directly related to the overthrow of Noriega brought support from the lower classes. First, there was the prestige of Diaz Herrera himself, who in the popular view represented the reformist Torrijista wing of the military and the official government party. His arrest robbed Noriega of the claim to be the heir of Torrijos and alienated members of the government party as well as the Moscow-line People's Party which supported the government. Second, the arrest of Diaz Herrera unleashed mass resentment which had seethed and festered in response to the extremely unpopular economic policies of Ardito Barletta and subsequently Delvalle, policies which were pressed upon Panama by the World Bank.⁴⁸ While the conservative elite at points expressed disapproval of the World Bank measures, it had in early 1985 given tentative support to Ardito Barletta's austerity policies. Indeed, the private sector's objections to the World Bank proposals had focused upon an increase in taxes, while it had endorsed the measures to weaken organised labour.⁴⁹ When organised labour had taken to the streets to protest about Ardito Barletta's economic policies, the same people who would subsequently lead the Civic Crusade had supported the government. Therefore, the mass protests of July and August 1987 represented a spontaneous and unstable alliance of classes which could not last.

⁴⁸ These policies were part of a World Bank structural adjustment programme in response to the government's difficulties in servicing its foreign debt. Among the most unpopular were a sharp reduction in social security benefits, a revision of the Labor Code which reduced workers' job security and the elimination of agricultural subsidies. See Weeks 'Panama: the roots of current political instability'.

⁴⁹ It appears that Ardito Barletta secured the cooperation of the private sector in early 1985 by promising to pursue vigorously the gutting of the Labor Code. *Central American Report*, 22 February 1985, 8 March 1985, and 12 April 1985.

particularly when the Civic Crusade made no serious attempt to enter into alliance with actual or potential leaders of the lower classes.

Having pointed out the weakness of the civilian opposition, we must also stress that Noriega was particularly vulnerable in mid-1987. To a great extent, his rationale for governance had disappeared. Torrijos had brought the military into the political field on a platform of nationalism and economic populism. By the 1980s all Panamanian political parties had pledged themselves to national control of the canal, eliminating the military's claim to the nationalist banner. And beginning in 1983 with an IMF stand-by agreement, the military-dominated governments progressively abandoned any pretence of populist economic policy. However, after the events of July and August 1987, Noriega's civilian supporters began to revive the rhetoric of populism, with an apparent strengthening of the Torrijista wing of the official party. This shift in rhetoric would intensify with the US intervention from February to April 1988. And with regard to nationalism, Noriega would find himself the beneficiary of growing resentment against the United States as the economic sanctions brought heavy costs to the country.

The course of the civilian protest in 1988 indicates the limits of its effectiveness. In late February 1988, Delvalle, Noriega's hand-picked successor to Ardito Barletta, travelled to the United States where he met US officials including Elliot Abrams, Under-Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Upon his return to Panama a few days later, he announced in a television broadcast that he had demanded the resignation of Noriega as commander of the Defense Forces.⁵⁰ To the dismay of Delvalle, the man he designated to succeed Noriega refused to accept the post. The day after Delvalle's unexpected announcement, the Panamanian legislature stripped him of the presidency and appointed in his stead the Minister of Education, Manuel Solís Palma, who promptly affirmed Noriega as commander of the military. At this point, the Civic Crusade called a general strike, which after initial success in paralysing the economy dwindled in effectiveness and was suspended on 4 March after four days. The Civic Crusade lost much of its spontaneous mass support when it appeared that one of the motivating factors in suspending the strike was the banal desire not to disrupt the scheduled annual trade fair which the year before had brought the private sector over

⁵⁰ Of the many surprising turns of events, this action by Delvalle is one of the more curious, since he had been the loyal sycophant of Noriega since replacing the unfortunate Ardito Barletta in September 1985, and had been held in general contempt by both the opposition and supporters of the government.

\$300 million in sales.⁵¹ Such is not the way the course of history is turned.

Along with the difficulties of maintaining mass support, the conservative opposition found increasing difficulty in maintaining unity within its own ranks. In part this was the result of the surprising US demand that Delvalle be treated by the opposition as the legitimate head of state of Panama. Whatever might have been Delvalle's virtues, a claim to political legitimacy was not among them. He had come to the presidency through a coup which had replaced his predecessor (who himself had been fraudulently elected). More seriously, Delvalle had loyally provided a civilian front for the Noriega dictatorship, continuing in his post when other high officials publicly broke with Noriega.⁵² The unpalatability of Delvalle to most members of the Civic Crusade generated splits in the conservative opposition. Leadership was claimed by two groups, the Crusade and Delvalle's hastily-constructed 'national reconstruction government', the latter being recognised as legitimate by the United States. As sanctions began to bite and heavy costs were incurred, resentment built up against the United States among Panamanians and another split occurred. In early April 1988 Arnulfo Arias took his Authentic Panamanian Party out of alliance with the Civic Crusade together with the Authentic Popular Action Party (one of the founding organisations of the Crusade), to form a new movement opposed to Delvalle and all US sanctions.⁵³

All of these difficulties reflect the general problem that conservative movements face when they lack mass support, a perennial failing of the political right in the Central American region. The typical conservative seizure of power in Central America and Latin America, even with some mass support, has relied upon the army to act at the crucial moment. The basic difficulty of the Panamanian civilian opposition is that it lacked the support of the masses, the vehicle for a radical bid for power, and it also lacked the back-up of the army to effect a coup. It is for this reason that support from the United States was so important,

⁵¹ *Latin American Monitor*, April 1988, p 522.

⁵² Of course, Delvalle formally presided over the repression of the protests following Diaz Herrera's denunciations. In October 1987, Vice-President Roderick Esquivel (Liberal Party) broke with his government, publicly denouncing it for corruption and tyranny. Delvalle responded by abolishing all offices under the vice-presidency and aided another leader of the Liberal Party in an attempt to take over the party from Esquivel. Thus, just two months before he sought to fire Noriega, Delvalle was presented with an opportunity for an alliance with dissidents within his government, but let the opportunity pass. *Central American Report*, 30 October 1987, and 6 November 1987.

⁵³ The National Civic Crusade had brought itself under a looser group called the Democratic Alliance of the Opposition.

with US power a possible substitute for the masses or the military. Yet it was precisely support from the United States that tended to discredit the Civic Campaign in the eyes of both the masses and the army. Itself weakened by a deep disagreement between the Departments of State and Defense,⁵⁴ the US government was incapable of a coherent and effective policy. When the Reagan administration proved unable to effect a change in power, the conservative opposition was left without influence and honour in its own land.

The final issue that needs to be discussed is why the US campaign of intervention failed in its own terms.⁵⁵ We shall deal exclusively with the economic sanctions. From press reports and statements by US officials, it appears that economic sanctions were designed to provoke a cash-flow crisis in Panama ('starve the economy of cash' as it was frequently put in the press). This was to be achieved by the freezing of Panamanian bank deposits in the United States and blocking the payments of various sorts of revenues to the Panamanian government (with the rationale that the sitting government was illegitimate and Delvalle the legal president). The inspiration for this strategy came from the remarkable characteristic of the Panamanian monetary system, namely, that it had no currency of its own. Put simply, the argument was, Panama uses US dollars, and if the Reagan administration could cut off its overseas supply of dollars, the economy would grind to a halt for lack of liquidity; in other countries governments can always meet their obligations by 'printing' money (at the risk of inflation, of course), but this was impossible in Panama, since it lacked a national currency.

The new policy of economic sanctions actually began with the decision to suspend US economic aid to Panama in July 1987. The World Bank followed suit in November by cancelling a planned loan of \$50 million. Then, in December the US government suspended Panama's sugar quota and instructed all US directors of multilateral agencies to vote against proposed loans and aid to Panama. However, all of these measures were little more than annoyances in the short run. The US vehicle to accelerate matters was a plan to destroy Panama's monetary system, begun after Noriega was indicted in Miami for drug-trafficking on 4 February 1988.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, in Panama the civilian opposition,

⁵⁴ Evans and Novak, *Washington Post*, 27 April 1988.

⁵⁵ In the discussion which follows, we were aided in clarifying our analysis through discussions with Richard Cornwall of Middlebury College, Vermont.

⁵⁶ Noriega became only the second foreign leader ever to be indicted in the United States, the first being the Chief Minister of Turks and Caicos Islands, Norman Saunders, in March 1985, also for alleged drug dealing.

with encouragement from the Reagan administration, announced its campaign of economic warfare to precipitate a liquidity crisis. The principal instrument of this campaign was a document issued by the US State Department on 3 March freezing \$50 million of deposits of Panama's *Banco Nacional* in New York banks. The *Banco Nacional* promptly notified commercial banks in Panama that it would be unable to meet its obligations and required the commercial banks to limit withdrawals. The next day, 4 March, Panama's National Banking Commission, concerned with prospective capital flight as well as liquidity pressure, closed Panama's banks.

With the banks closed, businesses in Panama adopted a policy of not accepting cheques and credit cards for payment. Cash, increasingly the only medium of exchange, grew in short supply as the psychology of crisis led to money hoarding. On 11 March, Reagan announced that the United States would withhold the \$6.5 million monthly payment for the canal and would suspend Panama's trade preferences, preferences that benefited approximately 30 per cent of Panama's exports to the United States.⁵⁷ On the same day, Delvalle's lawyers made public an agreement with the New York-based majority shareholder of the transisthmian pipeline company to direct payments due to the Panamanian government to Delvalle's escrow account at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York (instead of to Noriega). And in an action more symbolic than significant, the US government grounded Air Panama's two aircraft and cancelled its daily flights between Miami and Panama City.

Matters came to a head on 14 March, when Noriega's government missed its first payroll of about \$30 million to 145,000 public employees (20 per cent of the labour force). Among these employees were the 800 dock workers, who reacted with a strike and were soon joined by 80,000 other organised workers throughout the country.⁵⁸ While this virtual general strike made it appear that Noriega's grip on the country was weakening, it must be stressed that the primary demand by the strikers was that they be paid, not that the government change. There is no evidence that Noriega enjoyed any popularity among the strikers; equally, there is no evidence that the strikers were committed to the cause of the National Civic Crusade.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ In 1987 60 per cent of Panama's commodity exports went to the United States, so the preferences covered just less than 20 per cent of the total.

⁵⁸ *Central American Update*, 16 March 1988.

⁵⁹ A US reporter interviewed a dock worker who said, 'Any moment they come up with the money, I'll go back . . . There's no politics here. Noriega is not the issue . . . it's feeding my kids. No pay, no work, simple as that . . .' *New York Times*, 16 March 1988.

Faced with these pressures from organised labour, Noriega's government announced a plan for partial wage payments with commemorative coins, but the offer was rejected. Emboldened, the National Civic Crusade, which had suspended its first strike in order to participate in a trade fair, called for a second on 21 March. On 26 March, with the dock workers on strike for their twelfth day, the Panamanian government took over the Balboa docks and two large flour mills. This aggressive action marked the turning point of the crisis. Quickly, the government began to devise alternative means of payment for employees, and simultaneously received taxes and fees from multinational companies operating in Panama. With the liquidity shortage apparently waning, workers gradually returned to their jobs, and by the end of March the National Civic Crusade strike was disintegrating.

Among the payments received by Noriega was \$2.5 million at the end of March from Eastern Airlines, Texaco, and United Brands. This source of revenue for the Panamanian government represented a major loophole in the Reagan administration's tactic of 'cash strangulation', and one can only wonder why it was not anticipated. When corporate payments began to flow, White House officials obtained from the US Internal Revenue Service a ruling that the US foreign tax credit would not apply to profit taxes paid to Noriega, but would apply if taxes went into Delvalle's escrow account. It must be stressed that, relatively speaking, quite small sums of money were involved. Only in the very short term could these US measures exert serious pressure, for there were a number of tactics possible to circumvent the US liquidity war if Noriega lasted long enough. Perhaps recognising the urgency of the moment, the Reagan administration dispatched 1300 new troops to the Canal Zone to join the 10,000 already there. It is possible that the strategists in the White House looked back (fondly no doubt) to the days when the mere show of force could bring Panamanian governments to heel. Noriega, however, countered with the formation of armed 'people's battalions' in urban working class areas.

The situation was slipping quickly out of Washington's control (if, indeed, it had ever been within it), and subsequent measures came forth with an air of desperation. On 8 April the US Treasury Department announced what would be the last punitive measure in the liquidity war: payments of all taxes and fees to the Panamanian government were prohibited. The consequence of this bold step quickly proved farcical.

For failure to pay its electricity bill, the US Embassy found itself without power, prompting the White House to modify its latest move to exempt payments of utility bills, departure fees, and taxes on aeroplane tickets.

As the sanctions began to prove themselves ineffective, the US government found itself increasingly isolated and under attack diplomatically. At a meeting of SELA (the Latin American Economic System) on 29 March 1988, twenty-two Latin governments (including Chile and Cuba) called for an end to US sanctions and pledged to consider economic aid to Panama. Eventually aid would come from Mexico (concessionary oil sales), Western Europe, and Taiwan, among other sources. In addition, Latin American governments offered the assistance of their central banks to aid Panama in financial intermediation to end the liquidity crisis. By early May the financial pressure had dissipated sufficiently for Noriega's government to permit the re-opening of banks in the country. Diplomatically, the United States suffered repeated defeats as countries accepted Noriega's new president as the legitimate head of state. The most blatant embarrassment for the Reagan administration came when the new West German ambassador presented his credentials to Solis Palma on 14 June 1988.⁶⁰ The General had weathered the storm and the Reagan administration's policy had failed unambiguously.

If there were to be an overthrow of Noriega, the time was ripe in late March. But the peak of the crisis passed rapidly and the days when a coup might have replaced the General slipped inexorably by. At the most basic level, the problem was that the requisite political organisation that could take advantage of Noriega's difficulties did not exist. In consequence, the US sanctions generated enormous economic damage without seriously threatening the rule of the man they sought to remove from power. The legacy of the US campaign proved to be a strengthened Noriega, a decimation of the Panamanian banking system, a shattered private sector, and untold misery for the country's poor. In brief, the US campaign brought the economy to its knees and an indicted drug dealer onto his feet. It is estimated that by early June 1988 open unemployment had at least doubled to over 20 per cent,⁶¹ hotel rooms were 75 per cent vacant, and compared with the previous year

⁶⁰ *Central American Report*, 8 July 1988.

⁶¹ Robert White, former US Ambassador to El Salvador, estimated that half the labour force was without work, based on his trip to the country in late April. *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 May 1988.

retail sales, industrial output and agricultural production had fallen drastically.⁶²

The political change generated by the US actions was not the fall of Noriega, but quite the contrary: increased international sympathy and much greater domestic support for Noriega, who was seen as a victim of and bulwark against US aggression in Panama and Latin America. The 'forces of democracy and reform' from the private sector had been weakened, the environment for the international banking centre had been spoiled (perhaps irreparably), and the US government had been isolated and ostracised by the community of nations.

V Noriega's temporary (but enduring) victory

The irony (and perhaps tragedy) of the Noriega affair is that Manuel Noriega, accused murderer, election fixer, CIA client, and drug-trafficker, managed with the help of the Reagan administration to transform himself into one of the nationalist heroes of Latin America.⁶³ From an unsavoury tyrant destined for a black spot in the history books of Panama, Noriega was converted by the Reagan administration into a pivotal figure in the struggle for Panamanian nationalism and national respect. While other tyrants, presidents or prime ministers south of the Rio Grande have longed to stand bold and defiant before the colossus of the North, Manuel Noriega did and ruled to boast about it. Were Noriega to abandon his command and even leave Panama before the elections of 1989 (if they be held), his survival through the US campaign of 1987 and 1988 made it clear he had the power to dictate the terms of his departure.

⁶² *Central American Update*, 10 June 1988. The litany of miseries resulting from the US sanctions goes on and on. According to Darisnel Espino, the Panamanian Minister of Agriculture, sanctions caused a loss of agricultural output of \$300 million. Luis Moreno, general manager of Chase Manhattan Bank in Panama, estimated that \$7 billion had moved out of the International Financial Center to the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas. Senator d'Amato stated that over 25,000 middle class Panamanians had fled to Costa Rica by mid-April. And the relief agency of the Roman Catholic church, CARITAS, reported that the poor in Panama were growing desperately short of food.

⁶³ Gandasegui and Priestley suggested that the winner in the long run may be the progressive and populist left in Panama:

In its recent efforts to maintain hegemony over the Canal, the United States may have sacrificed the national bourgeoisie's development project, leaving open a single corridor: a people's option. Perhaps sooner than expected, the United States will face a new generation of Panamanians who will vindicate the country's humiliation and continue the struggle for national independence. M A Gandasegui and G Priestley, 'More than just a canal', *Central American Bulletin*, June/July 1988.

This, of course, would be the ultimate irony.

Pakistan and General Zia: era and legacy

Nothing, it seems, had changed. Zia came to power in 1977 promising elections; he left promising elections. In 1977 he formed an interim government after his coup; in 1988 he died as head of a 'caretaker' government. Eleven years on, Pakistan appears to have turned full circle. This however is true only of the circumference, for the internal political and economic situation has undergone fundamental change. A part of this change relates to perceptions regarding General Zia's hold on power. Initially his tenure was expected to be transitory, in view of his apparent deficiencies of temperament, ambition and background. This was to confuse the weaknesses of an unsure and mediocre front man with the institutional strength of the army. Military rule is very rarely brief and General Zia's tenure was no exception. Accordingly, by the time he died, there had been a sharp reversal of expectations regarding his durability. Partly because of the resentment against Zia created by Bhutto's execution it was widely assumed that General Zia's life would not be secure without power. He was therefore unlikely to relinquish his command irrespective of the gravity of the political mess created by his regime.

Indeed, there was a grudging admiration for his transformation from a 'simple soldier' to a 'wily politician' who outwitted his opponents by the uncertainty and unpredictability of his manoeuvres. This negative respect for the General—not dissimilar to the awe we accord to tigers and to lightning—had adverse consequences on a society weakened by a fickle government. During the last ten years Pakistan has been plagued by continuous insecurity and habitual confusion as the regime has selected random courses from a menu for survival. This obsession with retention of power in the face of persistent opposition has, as we shall argue below, further undermined the process of national cohesion in an already deeply divided country.

It is ironic that General Zia deprived himself of the opportunity of leaving an ambiguous, perhaps even favourable, last impression. Had he not dismissed his chosen prime minister less than three months before his death, his supporters may have been able to sustain the view that he was leading Pakistan gradually back to democracy towards the

scheduled free elections in 1990. By abruptly terminating the tenure of a docile parliament, elected through non-party polls in 1985, General Zia removed the illusion of a phased transition to democracy and crudely reasserted the parameters of military rule.

In this article we shall be reviewing economic and political developments between 1977 and 1988. This analysis of Pakistan under Zia is divided into two sections. Part One provides a chronology of events, placing them within the framework of the three phases into which the Zia period can be divided.¹ Part Two examines the major themes to have emerged during the course of his rule.

The three phases

The Zia period can be divided into three phases. During the first section, 1977-79, the regime deceived and outmanoeuvred the civilian opposition parties by publicly reiterating its commitment to holding elections while at the same time it undertook measures to entrench itself and consolidate its position. In 1979, General Zia dropped the pretence of being the leader of an interim regime. Between 1979 and 1983, the army tightened its grip and the military wrapped itself into the role of an ideological vanguard for a theocratic state. Political opposition was smothered by the uninterrupted use of martial law. The third phase began in 1983 with the junta desperately seeking to break out from its isolation. It had successfully withstood the risks involved in eliminating Bhutto. Similarly, the military had little difficulty in containing public protests for the restoration of democratic rule. The people may have been powerless to prevent these events, but reconciled to Zia they were not. Consequently, Zia's junta was more isolated than any other government in Pakistan's history—a feature underlined by the fact that martial law was in force for eight years. To overcome this ostracism, the outlines of a political order were announced in 1983. Under this scheme civilians were assimilated into the administration as adjuncts to military supremacy. This coalition lasted until a few months before the General's demise, when Parliament was dismissed in 1988 by those who had created it and needed it most. The civilian structure, set up in 1985, had begun to embarrass the military as the prime minister, Junejo, struggled to assert a degree of independence, an attitude which irritated and troubled Zia. By dismissing him, the General regained absolute com-

¹ Part I is a summary of the analysis contained in O Noman, *The Political Economy of Pakistan*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1988.

mand but lost what authority, respect and legitimacy he may have gained through the revival of parliamentary institutions.

The first phase: 1977-1979

The military coup of 5 July 1977 which was led by General Zia, Chief of the Army Staff, occurred two days after the outlines of an accord to settle the political crisis had been accepted by both the opposition alliance (PNA) and the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The crisis had arisen after widespread demonstrations charged Bhutto with having 'rigged' the elections held in March 1977. Bhutto, fearing military intervention,² had conceded the demand for holding fresh elections and virtually all of the opposition demands had been accepted.³ A few relatively minor issues were still to be resolved.

The army justified its intervention by claiming that Pakistan was on the verge of civil war.⁴ Such a grave polarisation was not, however, going to prevent the military from holding elections and 'transferring power within ninety days'.⁵ Yet the policy measures undertaken later were hardly those of an interim regime. Instead of announcing an annual plan, long-term economic policy changes were incorporated in a Five Year Plan. The Fifth Plan (1978-83) emphasised the shift in strategy whereby the private sector was to regain the prominence it had lost under the PPP.⁶ Other structural changes were made, such as the denationalisation of rice husking and flour milling units. Long-term measures were not confined to the economy. Just six weeks after the coup General Zia announced the formation of the Islamic Ideology Council.⁷ The council was entrusted with the task of preparing an outline of an Islamic theocratic state. These measures conformed to the intentions expressed by Zia in his first speech: 'I consider the introduction of an Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country'.⁸ Later, General Zia recalled that, after taking over, he had clearly defined priorities for his government of which 'the introduction of an Islamic order was on the top',⁹ implying that the transfer of power to civilians was a secondary consideration.

² Bhutto's fears of a coup are documented in letters contained in the *White Paper on the Conduct of the General Elections in March 1977*, Rawalpindi: Government of Pakistan, July 1978.

³ Indeed, General Zia acknowledged that Bhutto had done 'everything he could' to accommodate the opposition. See his statement in *Dawn* (Karachi) 10 July 1977.

⁴ See Zia's statement in *Dawn*, 7 July 1977.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ General Zia also stressed this change in strategy. See his statement in *Jang*, 2 September 1988.

⁷ Strictly speaking, this was a reconstitution of the moribund council.

⁸ *Morning News*, 6 July 1977.

⁹ *Dawn*, 11 February 1978.

Indeed, not only was it a secondary issue, it was an alternative which had to be prevented. However, it was awkward and difficult to deny the right of democratic government, especially in view of the fact that Pakistan had been embroiled in a mass movement, since March 1977, for free democratic elections. (The so-called 'rigged' elections were held on 7 March 1977; the demonstrations began after the results were announced on 9 March.) Accordingly, the military devised a strategy whereby the political leaders were to be held responsible for the postponement of elections. They were not fit to hold high office, while the army was seen to be willing, even anxious, to uphold democracy.¹⁰ This public subterfuge camouflaged more sinister concerns. The military were acutely aware that the most significant threat to its retention of power came from the deposed prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Not only had he played a critical role in mobilising mass protests to topple the military government of Ayub in 1968, he had also, in the process, become the first non-Punjabi ever as far as modern day politics are concerned to have created a mass political base in the Punjab. Worse still, there seemed to have been a revival in his popularity after his downfall. His rallies in Karachi and Lahore during August 1977 attracted awesome audiences. These were reasons enough for the junta collectively to support a strategy to eliminate Bhutto physically. Any further convincing they may have required was provided by General Zia for whom this grave issue had personal implications. It was most unlikely that Bhutto would have spared Zia's life were he to return to office. After all, he simply needed to invoke the 1973 constitution: Article 6 clearly would be the basis for a charge of 'high treason', for which the maximum penalty was death.

Accordingly, a special investigation cell was established by the martial law authorities to probe into malpractices committed by leaders of the PPP. Within a month of Zia's coup, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) completed inquiries into the murder of an ex-member of the National Assembly, Dr Nazir Ahmed, and alleged that Bhutto was responsible for it.¹¹ The FIA filed a further seven cases against Bhutto,¹² five of which were registered in a special court.¹³ He was accused of murdering Nawab Mohammad Ahmed Khan, the father of Ahmad Raza Kasuri. Kasuri, a former member of the National Assembly, had

¹⁰ See, for example, Zia's speech in *Dawn*, 16 August 1977.

¹¹ For a report of the investigation see *Dawn*, 16 August 1977.

¹² On charges which included corruption, malpractices and misuse of state instruments.

¹³ On 3 February 1978.

been the intended target of an ambush that went wrong. As early as September 1988 the special public prosecutor claimed that the 'state has got conclusive evidence of Mr Bhutto's complicity in the murder of Kasuri's father'.¹⁴

The campaign against Bhutto increased, rather than diminished, his popular support. The public response was one of sympathy for a deposed leader who was seemingly being persecuted by a regime whose motives were suspect. Senior opposition leaders admitted that they had little chance of electorally defeating Bhutto's PPP.¹⁵ General Zia postponed the October polls ostensibly because 'public opinion so demanded'.¹⁶

On 4 April 1979 Bhutto was hanged. The seven-member bench of the Supreme Court had upheld the verdict of the Punjab High Court. It was a split judgment divided along ethnic lines. The four Punjabi judges found Bhutto guilty of ordering the murder; the three non-Punjabi judges acquitted him. It was no coincidence that Zia's last promise of an election date (17 November 1979) was made on 23 March 1979, a few days before the execution.¹⁷ Throughout Bhutto's trial, the election bait had outwitted not only the parties opposed to Bhutto but also the leadership of the PPP. As long as Zia publicly adhered to the promise of elections, they were careful not to antagonise him into cancelling them. This ensured that they would not jointly attempt to mobilise a mass movement to demand elections and clemency for Bhutto. Shortly after the hanging, elections were cancelled and political parties banned.¹⁸

The second phase: 1979-1983

In contrast to the first period, the second phase was characterised by the explicit public disclosure of the army's intentions. 'There is no possibility of an early end to the third and longest martial law . . . we have come to stay,' declared Zia.¹⁹ Elsewhere he warned 'I will neither leave the scene nor allow anyone else to rise.'²⁰ The overt affirmations of intent coincided with a fortuitous external development. The Soviet

¹⁴ Barrister M Anwar's statement in *Pakistan Times*, 11 September 1977.

¹⁵ See, for example, Asghar Khan's admission in *Morning News*, 5 January 1978.

¹⁶ Zia had noted that 'public opinion seemed to be against October polls' in his press conference on 1 September 1977.

¹⁷ For a chronology of broken promises on the election issue see K. L. Kamal, *Pakistan, the Garrison State*, New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1982, pp 86-7.

¹⁸ Zia banned political activity on 5 July 1977 for a 'cooling off' period.

¹⁹ Interview with Zia in *Ittefaq* (Bangladesh), April 1982.

²⁰ Quoted in the Quarterly Report on Pakistan, Economist Intelligence Unit, second quarter, 1984. London: *The Economist*.

invasion of Afghanistan dramatically altered Pakistan's geopolitical significance. For the West, General Zia was now of consequence for one reason alone—his wholehearted support for the Afghan resistance against a Soviet-installed regime in Kabul. Other aspects of his rule were of no direct concern to them. This was hardly the time to quibble about democracy, Islamic fundamentalism or even nuclear power. The effects of the Afghan crisis on Pakistan are examined in Part Two below.

Internally, Pakistan was being gradually transformed into a theocratic state with totalitarian connotations. Details of the theopneustic measures are also discussed in Part Two. Here we shall concentrate on the relentless coercion of the second phase, designed to suffocate independent institutions and bludgeon public resistance. The latter objective was achieved by empowering military courts with indiscriminate and comprehensive powers. Unmitigated by judicial checks, the arbitrary martial law that these courts dispensed was used as a conscious instrument of a policy to instil fear. These military courts operated in a framework of absolute power, defined by a decree empowering the government to detain any person speaking or acting against the regime.²¹ Political activity itself was punishable by seven years' rigorous imprisonment and twenty lashes.²² President Zia publicly expressed the necessity for such coercion: 'Martial Law should be based on fear.'²³ In this context it is significant that measures to induce terror, such as hand amputation and public lashing, were announced initially in Martial Law Regulations prior to the Islamisation process.²⁴ Only later were they incorporated into the religious arena as forms of traditional punishment.

The drift towards a military-theocratic society required, in addition to the obedience imposed by fear, the elimination of independent sources of authority. Up to 1979, the judicial structure had been, to a limited extent, protecting citizens against arbitrary coercion by the state. For example, the Supreme Court judgment in *Begum Nusrat Bhutto v. Chief of the Army Staff and the Federation of Pakistan* stressed the right of the court to review the legality of martial law instruments, and to issue

²¹ Martial Law Regulation 13, issued on 5 July 1977, had this effect.

²² See Martial Law Regulations 11 and 13 (5 July 1977), 18 (27 July 1977) and 33 (28 February 1978).

²³ Interview with BBC television, 4 April 1978.

²⁴ On 10 July 1977, just five days after the coup, military courts were set up. At the same time, Martial Law Regulations instituted punishments of hand amputation, public whipping and death. See, for example MLRS 1-14 published on 5 July 1977.

writs of habeas corpus.²⁵ Invoking these provisions, the High Courts frequently quashed detention orders issued by the military and stayed flogging sentences meted out to political prisoners.²⁶ The Baluchistan High Court stayed the execution of death sentences passed by a special military court.²⁷ The same court declared that Zia's measures for curbing the judiciary were illegal.²⁸ Indeed, the Supreme Court judgment accepting the 1977 coup on the grounds of the 'doctrine of necessity'²⁹ stressed the conditional nature of the judicial vindication, based on the premise that General Zia's government would ensure a return to democratic government as soon as possible.³⁰

Measures taken against the judiciary were directed at removing two of its powers critical to the protection of the fundamental rights of a citizen. First, the power of judicial review of the legality and constitutionality of executive decisions was removed. Second, the judiciary was deprived of the authority to protect civil rights. These were taken away by successive annual measures between 1979 and 1981. The Constitution (Second Amendment) order of 1979 established a system of military courts, parallel to the civilian structure, to try offences under martial law. In the following year, the regime extended the jurisdiction of military tribunals, at the expense of the judiciary. The same order barred the higher courts from reviewing the actions of the military courts.³¹ However, by far the most severe measures to curtail the jurisdiction of the law courts were contained in the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) of 24 March 1981. The PCO terminated judicial scrutiny of any politically important executive action. It declared void all court decisions on the legality of martial law, thus rendering the 'doctrine of necessity' judgment irrelevant. Judicial protection against arbitrary

²⁵ Pakistan Legal Decisions, 10 November 1977, Supreme Court judgment on Mrs Bhutto's petition.

²⁶ For an account of judicial resistance to martial law orders see *Pakistan: human rights violations and the decline of the rule of law*, London: Amnesty International, 1982.

²⁷ In the farcical trial of A H Baluch, the name of the murder victim was changed twice when the alleged victim proved to be alive. *Ibid.*, p 14.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p 13.

²⁹ The 'doctrine of necessity' is derived from Bracton's maxim that 'that which otherwise is not lawful, necessity makes lawful' and the supporting maxims 'the safety of the people is the supreme law' and 'the safety of the state is the supreme law'. It had featured previously in the Special Reference Case No 1 of 1955 (1955 1 Pakistan Federal Court 439). See L Wolf-Phillips, 'Constitutional legitimacy: a study of the doctrine of necessity', *Third World Quarterly* 1 (4), October 1979, pp 97-133; and L Wolf-Phillips, 'Constitutional legitimacy in Pakistan, 1977-1982', in W P Zingel (ed), *Pakistan in its Fourth Decade*, Hamburg: Mitteilungen des Deutsche Orient-Institut, 1983.

³⁰ Pakistan Legal Decisions (PLD) 1977 SC, 705, 715-6.

³¹ Shortly after the issuance of this order (No 77 of June 1980), over a hundred military courts started functioning.

arrest was eliminated by the removal of the right of a prisoner to habeas corpus,³² the first time this right had been denied in Pakistan.

Control over the judiciary was inherent in the logic of extending military hegemony over all sectors of society. This process also entailed prohibiting access to information. That such restraints were part of the structure of military rule was publicly acknowledged by President Zia: 'Democracy means freedom of the press . . . martial law its very negation.'³³ The spirit of the constraints imposed by martial law was only too evident in all institutions. The familiar paraphernalia of repression does not need elaborate documentation here.

By 1983, President Zia had contained rival sources of authority, both outside and within the military. Political parties were banned and rendered impotent by the continuous incarceration of political leaders. The judiciary and the press had been marginalised. Zia had also survived attempts from within the army to stage coups. These were led by officers who were cynical about Zia's use of Islam to retain power and the consequent loss of the army's prestige in the country. On 17 March 1980, General Zia confirmed that a coup had been attempted against him.³⁴ In early 1983, forty middle-ranking officers were arrested for planning a conspiracy to oust and assassinate Zia.³⁵

Contrary to popular expectations, the Zia regime had survived both internal and external threats. However, survival had not enabled the regime to overcome its isolation. A wider social and institutional base of support was still proving to be elusive. Zia had hoped to create a mass base by eliciting support for the theocratic order being implemented by the government. Popular enthusiasm for this venture was not forthcoming. The inability to create a social base was of obvious concern to the junta. Zia's sensitivity to this failure was underlined by the lessons the military had learnt from Ayub's downfall, and he stressed that lack of popular participation was a key factor in the sudden capitulation of the military regime in 1969.³⁶ To break the regime's isolation, and to overcome the insecurity it bred, Zia initiated a programme to widen participation while retaining the supremacy of the military. Thus, the third phase of Zia's rule began in 1983, with the

³² Writ requiring a person to be brought before a judge or into court, especially to investigate the legality of his restraint.

³³ *Dawn*, 12 July 1977.

³⁴ *Asian Recorder*, 21 April 1980.

³⁵ Quarterly Report on Pakistan, Economist Intelligence Unit, second quarter, 1984.

³⁶ Zia had referred to this shortcoming several times. See, for example, *Pakistan Times*, 3 May 1985.

In the absence of policy prescriptions, the candidates mobilised support from traditional sources of authority and power. The dominance of the propertied classes is reflected in the composition of the National Assembly, shown in the table below.

Table 1
Background of National Assembly Members 1985

Landlords and tribal leaders	157
Businessmen	54
Urban Professionals	18
Religious leaders	6
Other	3

The sheer magnitude of the turnout (52 per cent), was a surprise to all groups—the military, the candidates and the opposition. The crucial factor responsible for such an impressive turnout, after a bland and timid campaign, appeared to be a perception among voters that the elections represented, however imperfectly, a decisive phase in the transfer of power to the civilians; that is, success of this process would lead initially to the sharing of power among civilians and the military, and eventually to the withdrawal of the army to the barracks. For the army, on the other hand, the objectives of the exercise were different. The generals needed civilian participation to end their isolation. The legislature, elected on a non-party basis, was to provide the institutional buffer to absorb a degree of political activity. Doubts about the permanent supremacy of the military were removed by the constitutional changes announced immediately after the elections. Less than a week after the polls, President Zia announced amendments to the 1973 Constitution without consultation with, or requiring ratification by, the legislature.³⁷ The constitutional changes formalised the concentration of power in the hands of General Zia. Presidential orders are deemed valid even if they violate fundamental rights.³⁸ The actions of the military since 1977 were also declared to be 'constitutional'. A provision was introduced whereby the Assembly could not repeal or amend any of Zia's martial law orders since the coup without his approval.³⁹ Whereas the above powers constrained the actions of the Assembly, safeguards were

³⁷ Revival of the Constitution of 1973 Order, 1985 (President's Order No 14 of 1985).

³⁸ The Fundamental Rights (Articles 8-28) remained suspended.

³⁹ Amendment to Article 270 of the 1973 Constitution: a new Article 270A.

introduced in case it transgressed these limits. President Zia had the power to dissolve parliament without the prime minister's consent.⁴⁰

A contradiction was inherent in the institutional structure created in 1985. The powers that the military were willing to grant to the legislature made its position untenable. The large turnout was seen as a mandate to terminate military rule, albeit in stages. The phased nature of the process imposed constant pressure on the legislature to be seen to be acting with a degree of independence from the military and to take steps towards the gradual transfer of power to the civilians. From the army's point of view, it was a structure which required sensitive handling if it was to deliver benefits. After all, if it was successful it could have provided an institutional mechanism for extending military control up to the end of the twentieth century.

On 29 May 1988, General Zia dissolved the National Assembly. Corruption, increasingly regarded as a somewhat noble virtue in Pakistan, was high on the agenda of reasons for dismissal. In the context of domestic politics, it was rather like banning a footballer for kicking the ball. Junejo, the longest serving prime minister of Pakistan after Bhutto, was dismissed contemptuously by his master. Before we go on to discuss the major themes to have dominated the Zia era, we shall briefly examine the causes of Junejo's dismissal and assess the impact of his period in office.

Four aspects of Junejo's tenure deserve particular attention. First, the very fact that a semi-civilian government was functioning created a diffuse political environment. No longer was there a straight battle between the army in power and civilians in opposition. Several sections of the civilian elite had been coopted and had developed a stake in the new political formation. Consequently, there was a certain flexibility of political alignments. Junejo became a respectable alternative for groups who had found it difficult to ally themselves openly with the army. Secondly, the Junejo government was associated with a gradual liberalisation of the rigid restrictions imposed under martial law. The press enjoyed considerably more freedom. The political parties were allowed to function openly. Indeed, Benazir Bhutto was allowed to return (April 1986) and address mammoth rallies. Junejo appeared to have felt that once the novelty of her return wore off, she would run out of steam. To some extent, it was a gamble which had paid off. During the latter part

⁴⁰ Although the President did not have the power to veto bills emanating from the National Assembly, he was empowered to delay the bill for forty-five days by an amendment to Article 75. The right to dissolve was included in an amendment to Article 58.

of the Junejo period, the PPP was beset with internal problems, reflected in the dismissal of Jahangir Badar as the chief of the party in the Punjab. Substantial opposition to him had grown within the party: the left attacked him for being too right wing, while the 'old guard' did not respect his pedigree and regarded him as a political upstart, ascribing his rise to Benazir's favouritism. Other members, such as Rao Rashid, publicly attacked Benazir's leadership. On her return she had reversed party policy in several key areas, explicitly ruling out further nationalisation of industry, removing land reform from the PPP agenda (instead stressing productivity issues) and tilting foreign policy in a direction more favourable to the USA, particularly in relation to Afghanistan: party workers openly questioned the wisdom of these policy changes. Such feuds and dissent within the party were the product of successive setbacks. The PPP had performed very badly in the election of local bodies in 1987. It had also failed to win by-elections to the National Assembly. Benazir's call for public protest to bring down 'the civilian facade' of Junejo and force Zia into free elections was met with stoical disdain. The momentum had shifted away from the PPP; a drift abruptly halted by the dismissal of Junejo in May 1988.

The third feature of the Junejo period was the formation of an 'official' political party from the top and the subsequent development of a populist programme for cultivating mass support. Although the parliament had been elected on a non-party basis, General Zia had subsequently encouraged members to band together under the umbrella of the Muslim League, the party which led the Pakistan movement under Jinnah but after his death soon became redundant as a political force. Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo was made leader of the 'King's party'. Since things were being done in reverse of the traditional pattern, it logically followed that the manifesto came last. It was termed the Prime Minister's five-point programme; suitably garnished with populist nomenclature, it consisted of targets to meet social sector objectives. In some ways, it was reminiscent of the PPP's populist discourse although it was hampered by the absence of a political party with mass support or the presence of charismatic leadership. None the less, the five-point programme did somewhat marginalise Islamisation as the central plank of government policy. Indeed, Junejo had talked publicly of repealing several aspects of the Islamisation programme, particularly the much resented Law of Evidence, under which the evidence of two women was equal to that of one man in certain legal situations. Another aspect of the five-point programme that is worth mentioning is that

prior to its implementation, only 10 per cent of public service expenditures—electricity, water, education, health—went to the rural areas. Under the five-point programme, the rural share went up to 50 per cent. This was as much to do with the powerful feudal lobby in parliament as with any populist considerations.

Finally, the Junejo government was singularly unsuccessful in stemming the rapidly deteriorating law and order situation. In Junejo's home province, Sind, ethnic violence escalated at an alarming rate. However, the most damaging source of destabilisation was external. The Afghan secret service, KHAD, launched a series of brutal and devastating attacks on civilian and military targets across the country. In two of the four provinces, Sind and NWFP, internal and external convulsions bred deep insecurities. Even that island of tranquillity, the province of Punjab, was shaken by effective sabotage of a munitions dump at Ojri in the Islamabad-Rawalpindi area. The extensive loss of life and property in the capital underlined the fragility of a country weakened by the consequences of its Afghan entanglement.

In spite of difficulties, the civilian facade was acting as an effective buffer, shielding the army from direct confrontation with the opposition. In a sense, the army enjoyed the best of both possible worlds—it retained effective power but could deflect failures to parliament. If this was so, why were Junejo and the National Assembly dismissed? The specific issues which led to the rupture will be summarised below. By themselves none of them were serious enough to cause a breakdown of the structure. Collectively, they provided uncomfortable signs to Zia and the generals that Junejo's assertions of independence were a device to upstage and dislodge the military's control. The dismissal was a gross error of judgement and interpretation. A more sophisticated approach would have avoided an act of political folly which put General Zia into a tight and somewhat pathetic corner by the time of his death. It is still difficult to see why Junejo could not have been replaced by another, even more pliant, prime minister from within the Muslim League. By demolishing the whole structure, General Zia lost by arbitrary decree what he had gained from electoral sleight of hand.

The following five points indicate the sources of insecurity for General Zia and his advisers, and suggest an explanation for the hasty dismissal of Junejo.

(1) Tension between Junejo and the army were evident with respect to resource allocation. Junejo had inherited a persistent budget deficit on account of mounting defence and debt-servicing costs, as well as

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poor tax collection. Indeed matters were made worse since Junejo's five-point programme needed increasingly scarce resources. To control the budget deficit, proposals had been made to freeze or curtail defence expenditure for the first three years of the Seventh Plan (1988–93). This proposal was met with a sharp public rebuke by President Zia that the current geo-political situation did not permit such reductions. Earlier, the imposition of a defence tax in the 1987 budget, and its subsequent withdrawal after public demonstrations, were seen to be directed against the army. Junejo appeared to be giving open signals to taxpayers that unbearable fiscal burdens were being imposed by the military's insatiable thirst for resources. Further tensions arose over the prime minister's austerity programme to deal with the budget deficit. Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, Lieutenant-General (retd) Ejaz Azim publicly accused Junejo of 'General bashing' after the Prime Minister had indicated that he was going to put 'generals in Suzukis'—their luxurious official cars were to be replaced by the modest Pakistan-assembled Suzukis. The generals, unused to such indecent notions of financial restraint, were clearly annoyed by Junejo's interference in their domain. (The government budget statement still gives no details of defence expenditure. Just one line covers the largest single source of expenditure.)⁴¹

(2) The blast at a munitions dump at Ojri in the heart of a densely populated part of Rawalpindi on 10 April 1988 became another source of friction between Junejo and General Zia. The ammunition was destined for the Afghan *mujahideen*. They were stored under the jurisdiction of the most important intelligence service, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The explosion caused panic and considerable loss of human life as missiles rained down on Rawalpindi and its twin city, the capital Islamabad. Many inhabitants thought that a war had broken out with India, possibly triggered by an attack on Pakistan's nuclear installation at Kahuta. It was a physically horrifying and psychologically unsettling experience. Junejo, not unreasonably, felt the necessity of holding someone accountable for the security leak that had permitted access to the dump and enabled saboteurs to launch an explosion which shook the capital. The Cabinet appeared to be holding the chief of ISI, General Akhtar Abdul Rehman responsible for the disaster. General Rehman was one of the key figures in Zia's junta (and was with the General when he was killed). Possible calls for General Rehman's resignation

⁴¹ It is worth mentioning that on 6 September 1988, Ghulam Ishaq (the new President of Pakistan) reiterated the commitment to maintaining current levels of defence expenditure.

were subverted by President Zia's action on 29 May, a few days after a cabinet committee had submitted its report on the explosion. It was no surprise that talk of accountability for the Ojri disaster, which had gained considerable momentum, came to an abrupt halt after parliament was unceremoniously dissolved.

(3) The Geneva Accords, intended to settle conflict in Afghanistan or, more precisely, to provide an agreed framework for Soviet troop withdrawal, proved to be another area of dispute between the General and the Prime Minister. The former had been committed to an aggressive Afghan policy, vowing to support the *mujahideen* until they formed an Islamic government in Kabul. Soviet troop withdrawal was fine but Zia was wary of other aspects of the Geneva Accords, fearing that they might lead to the abandonment of active support for radical Islamic groups within the Afghan resistance. Not only did Junejo appear to be more disposed towards a broader coalition government in Kabul, he was also taking credit for a decisive accord on Afghanistan. Junejo made little secret of the fact that he had responded to direct overtures from Gorbachev. The latter clearly preferred to communicate with the more flexible Junejo rather than the 'dyed-in-the-US wool' Zia. Irrked by Junejo's increased international standing after Geneva, General Zia was quick to assert that the government's Afghan policy had not undergone any fundamental change as far as support for the *mujahideen* was concerned. The General had also felt that he had been put aside during the negotiations leading up to Geneva. The Pakistan press has widely reported on how foreign affairs files were no longer being sent to Zia for approval as Junejo increasingly sought to exert his authority on foreign policy.

(4) In March 1988 Junejo called a Round Table Conference to discuss the proposed Geneva agreement. What was extraordinary about the event was that the invitation extended to political parties outside the fold of Zia's political structure. For the first time since 1977, the government and opposition parties were engaged in dialogue. The reason for the talks—to develop a national consensus on the Geneva Accords—was almost secondary. The army was alarmed by this flagrant violation of the spirit of the 1985 civil-military coalition. Benazir Bhutto also played her cards well at the Round Table Conference. She pursued her policy of driving a wedge between Junejo and Zia. Her carefully-worded statement praised the former for having the courage to extend an invitation. The usual contempt was shown towards the President and his policies. For the civilians to band together a year before the scheduled

1990 elections was an ominous precedent. This man Junejo, it appeared, was beginning to alter his shoe size.

(5) A relatively minor incident added fuel to the fire of strained civil-military relations. A quarrel between a local member of parliament and military officers led to a mob riot against an army training school near Rawalpindi. Furniture was smashed. Zia's portrait was burnt. The Muslim League, and Junejo, did not disown the member of parliament, Bashir-ul-Hasan. Indeed, the Prime Minister spoke out against the military officers concerned. The actual incident which sparked off this episode appeared to be a case of 'girl teasing' by military officers which had outraged the local community. The subsequent attack on the training school would not have been possible under martial law. The army had grown accustomed to such immunity. Bashir-ul-Hasan was later arrested, the day after Junejo was sacked.

In spite of the above mentioned frictions, the parliamentary facade still provided considerable benefits to the military. The army's hold on power was not seriously threatened. If Junejo was getting 'out of line', he could be dispensed with. The limited liberalisation had strengthened the system. Thus, the dismissal of a constrained parliament was an act of political folly that did far more damage than good to the army's interests. By the time he died, General Zia's system was in shambles. He was on the retreat and defensive yet again. Overnight his parliament had lost the legitimacy of a transitional mandate. It was abundantly clear that a phased sequence towards democratic government was not on the agenda. The General was up to his tricks again. The man who was pulling the strings had to make a personal appearance on stage again. The audience was not amused.

Major themes 1977-1988

The above chronology does not provide us with the answers to some of the crucial questions of the Zia era. Why was the majority province Punjab so politically dormant? Why were Benazir Bhutto and other opposition parties not able to organise popular protest in Punjab sufficiently threatening to bring down the regime? What were the objectives and effects of Islamisation? Who has benefited from the fourth fastest economic growth rate in the Third World? How has the situation in Afghanistan affected Pakistani society? What of the future? Our brief analytical review covers the economy, Afghanistan and Islam.

The economy

Perhaps the most significant economic development under General Zia was the dramatic growth of remittances from the Middle East. Although manpower export began under the Bhutto administration, the large influx of remittances coincided with the first year of the Zia regime. By 1984, remittances constituted the largest single source of foreign exchange earnings. They were four times greater than net aid inflow to Pakistan. Their volume, \$3.2 billion per annum at the peak, was substantial in relation to the size of the economy. The value of remittances was approximately equal to 8 per cent of GNP.

The most favourable impact of migration has been the decisive impact on the living conditions of a large number of poor families. Approximately 10 million people have benefited directly from the exodus to the Middle East. The vast majority of the beneficiaries come from low-income households. On average, their salaries increased eight-fold.⁴² The pattern of migration to the Gulf has been fundamentally different from that to Western Europe and North America. Migrants to the Gulf go on short-term contracts and are not allowed to take their families with them. These workers, 85 per cent of whom are of working-class origin, send back most of their incomes to support dependants in Pakistan.

The second significant feature of migration is the uneven regional impact of benefits. Seventy per cent of migrants come from Punjab; it is the only province whose share of the migrant population exceeds that of its proportion in the national population.⁴³ Most of the migrants come from urban areas. The combined effect of the regional and urban bias in migration has had serious implications for the political system. To topple a government in Pakistan one needs to demonstrate street power in Punjab and in urban centres across the country. This was evident in the movements which brought down Ayub and Bhutto. Consequently, the political parties opposing Zia relied on the mobilisation of organised groups in urban areas, particularly in the Punjab. Ironically, it was precisely from this category that a large proportion of emigrants came. The classes on which the MRD was relying to be in the vanguard of a national movement against the military were to become the primary beneficiaries of the Middle East.

⁴² For details see O Noman, 'The impact of migration on Pakistan's economy and society', Lahore: Economic Policy Research Unit, discussion paper.

⁴³ See K Gilani and Iqbal 'Labour migration to the Gulf', Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, research monograph 126.

Table 2
International Comparison of GDP Growth of Production Rates 1980-1986
 (in percentages)

Botswana	11.9	Sri Lanka	4.9
China	10.5	Malaysia	4.8
Korea	8.2	Thailand	4.8
Pakistan	6.7	Egypt	4.7
Jordan	5.1	Algeria	4.4
Singapore	5.3	Bangladesh	3.7
Burma	4.9	Indonesia	3.4
India	4.9		

Source: *World Development Report 1988*, Washington DC: World Bank.

The rotation and mobility in the Gulf job market led to the formation of expectations, amongst the working class who remained in Pakistan, that opportunities might yet arise to raise living standards dramatically. This effect on working-class ideology was noted by an ILO study: 'With such large-scale migration of workers, people feel that with a little bit of luck, it is possible to be among the next batch of migrants . . . the working class has come to believe that it is upwardly mobile.'⁴⁴ Thus, given the choice of confronting the military in an inevitably violent movement or keeping politically dormant to enhance the possibility of migration, it is not surprising that a large number of people chose the latter.

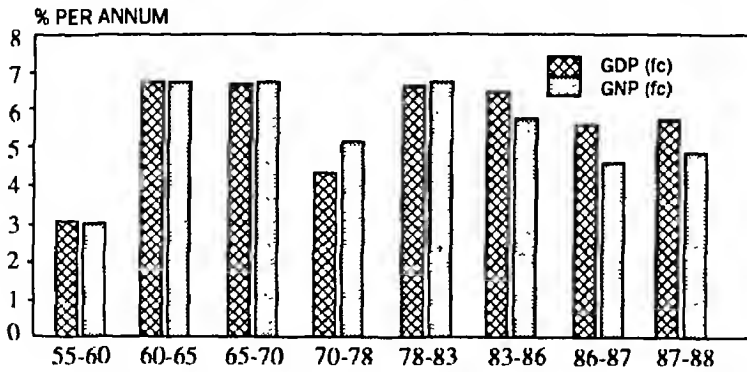
The Gulf boom has now begun to exhaust itself and the next regime in Pakistan has not only to face the problem of re-integrating returning migrants but also has to deal with the high level of expectations and conspicuous consumption generated by the Gulf bonanza. The benefits to Pakistan were those of a windfall nature. While it is undoubtedly true that affected families have benefited greatly, little has been done to collectively mobilise migrant savings to create productive opportunities which could benefit society.

The aggregate growth rate of the economy has been quite impressive. As Table 2 indicates, Pakistan's growth performance has been bettered only by China, Korea and Botswana.

Tables 3 and 4 also reveal interesting features about the growth performance. Table 3 compares average growth performance across four decades and shows that average growth under Zia was comparable to

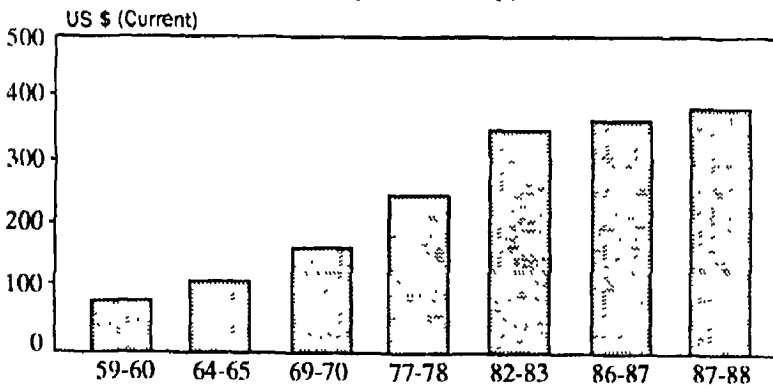
⁴⁴ 'Impact of return migration on domestic employment in Pakistan: a preliminary analysis', Bangkok: International Labour Organisation- Asian Regional Team for Employment Promotion, 1984.

Table 3
Real Growth Rates



Source: *Pakistan Economic Survey*, 1987-1988.

Table 4
Per Capita GNP (mp)



Source: *Pakistan Economic Survey*, 1987-1988.

the buoyant 1960s. Table 4 documents the growth in per capita incomes since the 1950s. The figure does not account for inflation and therefore exaggerates the rise. Nevertheless, there has been a steady rise in average income in real terms. This growth performance glosses over several issues regarding the uneven spread of benefits from this growth. Many of the regional and class distributional problems which plagued Pakistan in the 1960s continue to be relevant. Most of the prosperity under Zia was confined to the Punjab. Increasing evidence suggests that both the regional and class distribution became more skewed under General

Zia.⁴⁵ Remittances from the Gulf somewhat mitigated the effects of economic policies designed to increase the affluence of the rich. It is however ironic that the government was not the recipient of the usual benefits of such a policy, that is, the rich get richer and save more, thus increasing investment resources. The domestic savings rate actually *fell* during the 1980s. This was largely on account of the uncertainties of a financial system undergoing Islamic reform, as well as continuing political unrest which has made long-term investment a risk.

Currently the economy faces serious obstacles to sustained growth. Four problems deserve particular attention. The first relates to the inability to raise domestic resources. We have already referred to the fall in the rate of savings. The government also has a crushing budget deficit, due to its continuing inability to raise tax revenues. To pay direct taxes in Pakistan is considered some form of a social disgrace, the spread of which is being checked with considerable success. Direct taxes therefore contribute a minuscule proportion of total government revenue, and little progress has been made in increasing the share of direct taxation. Thus, the tax structure remains regressive, as indirect taxes, which provide most public revenue, take a larger proportion of a poor person's income. In the last budget (June 1988) new measures were introduced to increase income tax revenues. Stiff penalties were prescribed for offenders. The business community reacted sharply and have refused to subscribe to the recent changes.

The question of resource mobilisation is not merely a technical issue relating to more efficient methods of tax collection. The problem is embedded deeply into the structures of economic and political power which sustained the Zia regime. The pattern of state patronage adopted has affected resource mobilisation; for example, agricultural incomes are not taxed in Pakistan. In March 1988, the planning minister declared that 'imposing an agricultural income tax is a test of our government's credibility . . . we cannot have a just or efficient tax system as long as we have one class in society which is exempted from paying tax.'⁴⁶ When the budget was announced two months later, the feudal lobby in control of parliament had blocked the agricultural income tax proposal. It was no wonder that traders felt that they were being 'victimised'. Tax paying is deeply influenced by the manner in which people

⁴⁵ The former finance minister, Mahbub-ul-Haq has publicly acknowledged increasing skewed distribution of income and assets.

⁴⁶ Statement made at a forum on the economy organised by the *Nation*, Lahore. The author was present

Table 5
Population and Labour Force Projections

	1988	Estimate 1993
1. Population (millions)	105.43	122.82
2. Total Labour Force	31.00	36.54
3. Unemployment	1.11	2.78
4. Unemployment rate as % of labour force	3.6	7.6

Source: *Draft Seventh Five-Year Plan.*

perceive the government. Over the past decade, Pakistan society has been afflicted by deep and extensive penetration of smuggling, corruption, drugs and arms inflows. There is a widespread belief that the government has to have either pardoned or actively engaged in these activities in a society so tightly controlled by the state. This has led to a pervasive lack of respect for state institutions. Even in countries which have respected institutions, people wish to minimise tax payments. In a society with 'load shedding' (inadequate electrical supply), lack of public transport, absence of law and order and an unstable military regime, tax raising is a hazardous task.

In the coming years the squeeze will have to come on the expenditure side. This will have inevitable adverse consequences for the growth rate. Nearly 88 per cent of current expenditure goes into defence, administration and debt servicing. In a situation which is militarily volatile on the western front and with the increasing lawlessness within Pakistan, the room for manoeuvre on defence cuts seems limited. Short of a moratorium which Pakistan may be forced into in the future, there is little that can be done about debt-servicing commitments. The squeeze will therefore have to fall on social sectors and the development budget. It is difficult to see how present development plans can be sustained.

The second problem confronting the economy after that of resource mobilisation, is unemployment. At 3.1 per cent, the population growth rate of Pakistan is one of the highest in the world. Not only does the economy have to absorb a rapidly growing labour force, it also has to confront the problem of returning migrants. Projections for the future suggest an acute problem of youth unemployment. As Table 5 indicates, the unemployment rate is expected to double by 1993. In a society with easier access to hard drugs than alcohol, unemployed youth could provide a sorry market for the former.

The third problem confronting the economy is that of a mounting

debt problem. Net aid inflows have fallen quite substantially in recent years. Pakistan is now borrowing increasingly large amounts to service its debt. The fourth problem also relates to the external sector. Pakistan's balance-of-payments problems accumulate as remittances drop, demand for exports falls in the Middle East, terms of trade continue to decline and the propensity to import continues to exceed the ability to increase export revenues. There is a sense in which Pakistan's economy has been living on borrowed time. The next government will have to preside over structural reforms which will be extremely unpopular.

Afghanistan

For the Zia regime, several beneficial consequences followed from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The significance of the gains was accentuated by the precarious position of the military dictatorship at that juncture. It faced both domestic and international revulsion and isolation in the wake of Bhutto's hanging and the introduction of savage punitive measures. Relations with the USA were severely strained. The Carter administration had suspended all military supplies to Pakistan, in response to the latter's pursuit of a nuclear capability. Thus, the alteration in Pakistan's geopolitical significance for the West could not have come at a better time for Zia. First, in exchange for providing a base for sustained guerrilla activity against the Soviet-Afghan administration, Pakistan received a \$3.2 billion package of US military and economic aid. Second, the USA subsequently ignored Pakistan's nuclear programme, enabling her to proceed without excessive hindrance or the adverse publicity and pressure that had been exerted by the Carter administration. Third, central government support for the Afghan guerrillas initially defused parochial forces in the Frontier province. The movements for provincial autonomy and democratic government became embroiled in the developments in Afghanistan and the resulting influx of three million refugees. Finally, the support of the USA and Middle Eastern Muslim countries for Zia gave international legitimacy to military rule in Pakistan, on the ground of regional necessity. Thus, at a critical juncture, Zia was able to distract domestic attention to the threat posed by Afghanistan. Sudden international prestige increased Zia's stature within the army. The benefits accruing to the government need to be contrasted with the costs borne by the local population. It is true that, by and large, the host population has reacted with considerable graciousness and accommodation to this large influx of refugees. This hospitality and lack of friction was helped

considerably by ethnic affinity with the refugees. However, the longer the refugees remain captive in Pakistan and, concomitantly, the longer the war goes on, the more is the patience of the host community put under strain.

Two menacing effects on Pakistani society are commonly associated with the Afghan crisis. The first is the militarisation of civil society due to the large influx of arms. Relatively sophisticated weapons were used, for example, in the ethnic violence which flared in Karachi in 1986. The easier access to arms has been a dangerous side-effect of the Afghan crisis, and has particularly ominous implications for the future level of violence in civilian conflicts within Pakistan. The second feature commonly associated with the Afghan development is drugs. The growth of the drugs trade has not only created a substantial community of addicts within Pakistan but has also contributed to an insidious debasement of public morality.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, the costs have become excruciatingly high. The destabilisation campaign by the Afghan secret service has caused havoc across Pakistan. Ironically, the development which gave such international prominence to Zia may well have been the cause of his demise. Prudence suggests that the new government in Pakistan will be more supportive of a coalition government in Kabul, rather than backing the extreme right-wing group of the *mujahideen* alliance led by Gulbadin Hekmatyar. However, one senses that Pakistan's ability to control events is extremely limited. The Afghan civil war die has been cast. Pakistan may have little option other than to grin and bear it. The devastation has only just begun as the Afghan saga heads towards a brutal climax.

Islamisation

Religious measures implemented by the Zia regime to mould every aspect of life and activity in conformity with Islam's moral norms were a response to two aspects of the political crisis engendered by the military coup. Not only had Zia replaced an elected government, but he was also the leader of an army tarnished by the humiliating defeat of 1971. At one level, therefore, the creation of a theocracy was an attempt to fill the political vacuum created by Zia's renegation on his promise to hold elections. Islamisation provided an objective for utilising state power, which the military had refused to transfer to civilians. At another level, the creation of a theocracy was a delayed response to 1971. Events in that year had eroded confidence in the validity of the original

demand for Pakistan. It appeared to be the case that religion alone did not provide a sufficient basis for a nation-state, contrary to the claims of the two-nation theory. General Zia, however, saw the split not as a failure of Islam but rather as the consequence of his predecessors having abandoned Islam. To him, the possibility of creating a theocracy was inherent in the logic of Pakistan, even though its leaders had always rejected such implications. Zia invoked the origins of Pakistan as providing historical legitimacy for the creation of a theocracy.

Apart from motivational objectives internal to the military, an appeal to a wider constituency was sought through religious discourse. The aim was to create popular legitimacy for the army as an instrument for a radical religious transformation of society. However, the government was singularly unsuccessful in creating a mass base for a theocracy. Unlike Iran, the Islamisation process was launched unilaterally by the regime. The lack of a popular mandate was evident in the 1984 referendum on Islamic policies, in which the abysmal turnout indicated lack of enthusiasm for a theocracy. None the less there is popular respect for religion and widespread observance of religious practices. By adopting Islam as a legitimising ideology, one at least can ensure against the possibility of anyone mobilising against the central ideology.

Only with the election of Junejo did Islamisation lose the centrality it had enjoyed since 1977. Junejo's five-point programme displaced Islamisation as the central plank of government policy. The dismissal of the Junejo administration was followed soon after by another dose of fundamentalism. The Shariat Ordinance revived President Zia's vision of a monolithic military-theocratic state. Islam had become his *raison d'être*. Ostensibly a deeply religious man, he clearly wanted to establish Pakistan firmly within the fold of the global revival of fundamentalist Islam. His committed support for the particularly conservative sections of the Afghan resistance was part of this world view. This venture had considerable financial and ideological support from Saudi Arabia. Fortunately, his dream of recreating, as faithfully as possible, the society that prevailed in seventh-century Arabia has few adherents in Pakistan.

The Zia era provides further convincing evidence, if it was still needed, that Islam is not sufficient for national cohesion. General Zia leaves behind him a country divided and wounded by internal dissension. Since his regime was obsessed with preventing national political movements, it was perhaps inevitable that traditional and local cleavages widened. Ethnic tensions are more acute now than they were when General Zia took over. A crucial component in Zia's strategy was to

keep Punjab happy and content. To a large extent he was successful for Punjab has been the beneficiary of most of the economic prosperity. The army is mainly Punjabi and military rule provides unique benefits to members of that province. There was a rapid extension in the size of the army and these manpower requirements were met largely from within the Punjab, thus incorporating a substantial number of families into the network of military privileges. Only in the Punjab does the law and order situation permit a degree of security palpably absent in other provinces. Not surprisingly, the province is increasingly acting as a magnet for investment resources as projects are diverted from less secure areas. The contrast with the second largest province, Sind, could not be sharper. The region has been paralysed by violent ethnic strife. Tensions between the old and new Sindhis have grown sharply in the last decade. (The latter refers to people who migrated from India in 1947.) Relatively recent migrants to the province have also been at each other's throats—the Biharis from Bangladesh and Pathans from the Frontier province live in mutual fear and suspicion. General Zia executed one prime minister and discarded another—both were Sindhis. Rural Sind has borne the brunt of opposition movements to topple President Zia. The resentment against Punjabis and the 'Punjabi Army' grew rapidly under Zia. The current symbol of anti-Punjabi sentiment is the proposed Kalabagh Dam. All the provinces, except Punjab, oppose the building of this dam since it would allegedly alter the distribution of water to Punjab's benefit.

Sectarian divisions also sharpened under General Zia. The Zia era was the most violent as far as Shia-Sunni clashes are concerned. Indeed, 1988 has been a particularly bad year. Early in the year, sectarian clashes took a heavy toll in the northern area of Gilgit. A few weeks before the General's death, the main Shia leader of Pakistan, Shaikh Arif Hussein Al-Husseini, was murdered near Peshawar. He had emerged as a major symbol of Shia reaction to Sunni fundamentalism being imposed by the state. The Qadiani sect, declared non-Muslims by the Bhutto regime, have been persecuted over the last decade in a manner which does little credit to those upholders of the faith who pride Islam for its treatment of minorities.⁴⁷

The immediate political battle is between those who claim the mantle of Zia and those who wish to establish a democratic government

⁴⁷ The Constitution (Second Amendment) Act, 1974 (49 of 1974) added Clause (3) to Article 260 to declare those 'who do not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad . . . is not a Muslim for the purposes of the Constitution or law'.

through free elections. The former camp consists not only of the army but also of loyal remnants of the civil-military structure, such as the Punjab chief minister, Nawaz Sharif. The Punjab has been ruled by a coalition of the commercial-industrial class, the rural elite and the generals. Nawaz Sharif, along with the NWFP chief minister, Fazle Haq, have already indicated their desire to continue with the power-sharing arrangement which Zia had initiated in 1985. The army has the option of reviving that structure or reimposing martial law/emergency rule. Pressing for the third option, democratic elections, are Benazir Bhutto and other opposition leaders. However, the army is not likely to hold free elections unless the opposition launches a street protest movement which makes Punjab ungovernable under the present dispensation. This battle between dictatorship and democracy will be decided in the Punjab. One side needs to arouse passions; the other wants to dull the senses.

Pakistan is a fragile multi-ethnic state with a poor record of national integration. General Zia's tenure did little to further the cause of national cohesion. For Pakistan, the future is disturbing and uncomfortable. Ironically, it is a country with considerable economic potential. Unfortunately, as in the 1960s, the dynamism is likely to be subverted by political upheaval. General Zia had inherited a tortured political history: dismemberment, insurgencies, election rigging. This unhappy blend has been further soured by a debilitating decade. Sind is a bleeding wound where force is being used to suppress dissension. The frontier is likely to remain a casualty in a continuing civil war in Afghanistan. Baluchistan simmers and promises to reveal scars which have not healed. The serenity which Punjab enjoys is put under increasing strain by the tensions which threaten to engulf it. General Zia's rule increased the divisions, ruptures and bitterness within an insecure nation. It is not so much a case of failure—it is more in the nature of a tragedy.

The Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict: structure and sentiment

One can only refer to the recent Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict in the Soviet Union as a terrible tragedy. This is not only because of the loss of life and the associated disruptions. It is also a tragedy because the events reveal how frail any peace can be, how futile unsubstantiated expressions of inter-ethnic harmony voiced by government authorities can be, and how enduring the yoke of Empire can be. For these reasons, the wider connotations of the conflict are of concern not only for those connected with Soviet affairs but also for all fellow human beings. In particular, those concerned with the Third World will find several parallels with other histories and other destinies.

The criterion used for selecting some thoughts on the conflict was to seek out their relevance for compiling comparative data rather than for analytical perspectives, despite the interesting implications for the latter. For this purpose too, issues have not been placed in any implicit theoretical framework other than one from which the deduction is made that particular aspects of the Soviet system (called 'structures' for the sake of simplicity) are directly related to the sentiments which have been expressed by the protagonists.

The events

A brief summary of the main events which have occurred up to September 1988 in the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Transcaucasia are as follows:

20–26 February: in Erevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia, hundreds of Armenians demonstrated in the streets demanding, in the name of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, that the wishes of the Armenian majority population in Nagorno-Karabakh, an 'autonomous region' within Soviet Azerbaijan (also known as Nagorny Karabakh or Mountainous Karabakh and part of a larger province of Karabakh), should be respected and that the area should be transferred to the jurisdiction of Soviet Armenia.

27 February: Armenian representatives, returning from a meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, appealed for calm and asked their compatriots to declare a month's truce while the ultimate authorities—the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, based in Moscow—sought a solution.

In order also to appeal for calm, a radio broadcast from Baku stated that two Azerbaijanis had already lost their lives in the conflict. At about the same time, some Azerbaijani refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh arrived in Sumgait and other towns of Azerbaijan claiming that they no longer felt safe in the disputed region.¹

28 February: in the streets of Sumgait, a 'new' industrial town in Azerbaijan, violent riots took place. It is reported that Azerbaijanis, mostly young men, initiated a massacre in which many Armenians were killed. It is alleged that brutality was witnessed including, for example, atrocities committed against Armenian women in a maternity hospital. Inexplicably, the local militia remained inactive. There was a general outcry as news reached the outside world. The number of casualties is hotly contested, although it is agreed that at least thirty-two lives, including those of at least twenty-six Armenians, were lost (although it could be more).²

18 March: the local Nagorno-Karabakh Communist Party Committee, formed largely of local Armenians, voted for a transfer to Armenia. No decision a local party takes can be implemented without ratification from the centre, in this case from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan with an Azerbaijani majority.

25 March: in Yerevan an associated protest strike began which lasted about two weeks.

21 May: the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee dismissed the first secretaries of the Communist party in both Armenia and Azerbaijan on the grounds of incompetence.

23 May: a strike in Stepanakert, the regional capital of the disputed area of Nagorno-Karabakh, began and has continued on and off until the present time.

31 May: a large demonstration took place in Yerevan followed by street gatherings which have continued until the present; the transfer of administration of Nagorno-Karabakh to Soviet Armenia is repeatedly demanded.

12 June: troops sent from Moscow by the order of the All-Union Government patrol Baku after disturbances there.

¹ I refer to the Muslim, Turkish-speaking population in the territory as Azerbaijanis, the term they prefer for themselves. In pre-Soviet times and in Southern Azerbaijan the word 'Turk' had sometimes been used simply to distinguish a Muslim from others. In English language publications they are often referred to as Azeris. The Armenians, when angered, sometimes refer to them derogatively simply as 'Turks' or 'Tatars'.

² Every source, Western and Soviet, is different. The figures are from the *Independent*, 18 July 1988, although they cannot claim to be accurate, with some sources claiming hundreds of casualties instead.

15 June: the Armenian Supreme Soviet in Erevan (the main legislative body which, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, rubber-stamps the decisions of the local Central Committee of the Communist Party which it represents), voted for the transfer of the disputed region to Soviet Armenian jurisdiction. This partially met the requirement in the Soviet Constitution that both Soviet republics with such a dispute should agree together to a transfer of territory.

17 June: the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet in Baku rejected the move to transfer its territory of Nagorno-Karabakh to Soviet Armenia, thus impeding the only available solution for fulfilling the Armenians' demands.

28 June: at the 1988 Soviet Communist Party Congress (the Supreme Party body) in Moscow the General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, stated that no exceptional changes to borders could be made between Soviet republics.

5 July: troops were used to clear Erevan airport which had been occupied by Armenian protestors. There were over forty people hurt among the demonstrators with one fatality.

12 July: the local Armenian-dominated Supreme Soviet in Nagorno-Karabakh unilaterally declared its transfer to Soviet Armenian jurisdiction. Later the same day, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku, to whom all local decisions must be referred, declared the decision illegal and therefore annulled it.

18 July: in Moscow, the Presidium of the All-Union Supreme Soviet gave its ruling, which had been awaited eagerly by both sides, but in particular by the Armenians who had recently called off some of their protests: Nagorno-Karabakh must remain within Soviet Azerbaijan. Greater attention would be given, however, to the local complaints of maladministration, economic underdevelopment and so on, made by the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh. They upheld an earlier decision, made in March shortly after the conflict began, to give substantial economic aid to the region, amidst local complaints that the aid was slow in coming and doubts about its administration.

19 September: amid reports of continuing protests in Erevan and Nagorno-Karabakh, the Soviet press had reported fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh in which at least twenty-five people were injured and, although not officially reported, some may have been killed. The Soviet government issued a stern warning against further ethnic disturbances. A Russian was appointed head of security in Azerbaijan.

At the Armenians' insistence, a court in the Russian Republic is hearing the cases of the Azerbaijani youths implicated in the February atrocities.

The background

By tradition the intellectuals of the Soviet Caucasian Republics have used a historical frame of reference, which goes back several millenia, for their national identity and culture. To this we will return later. For an understanding of the background to the present dispute, however, it is the events of the past hundred years or so which are most relevant, in particular those of the first quarter of this century.

There is a sense in which 'Historical Armenia' can be seen to have had a territorial core which extended out to boundaries which varied greatly over the centuries. Sometimes Armenia had had no independent sovereignty at all but at other times it had. Also, several ethnic groups had shifted in significant ways and in large numbers across the territories of the Caucasus. Thus the neighbours of the Armenians, whether Georgian, Azerbaijani or Turkish (in the period of modern history) can argue with them about the legitimacy of particular border claims. It would be difficult not to recognise, however, that the territorial expression of the Armenian nation was rooted in an area covering parts of what is now known as Western and Eastern Armenia. This area, with the nation it embodies, was caught and divided tragically between two empires of great importance in the last century: Turkey and Russia.³ Armenian arguments over the legitimacy of Nagorno-Karabakh's incorporation into Soviet Azerbaijan require the testimony of events and agreements which were made between Turkey and Russia and, indeed, between Lenin and Kemal Ataturk.⁴

Continual harassment over the centuries resulted in the migration of Armenians to various territories in the Caucasus (such as Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia where they formed a majority in the nineteenth century) and further afield in the world. In Turkey, however, a policy to remove them from the territory known as Western Armenia (which was under Turkey), and general animosity against them at particular times, resulted in widespread massacres of Armenians in 1894 and 1896 and a virtual Armenian holocaust in 1915 which has sharply marked the collective spirit of Armenians everywhere, whether in California or in Soviet Armenia.

³ See C J Walker, 'Between Turkey and Russia: Armenia's predicament', *The World Today* Aug-Sept 1988.

⁴ See G B Libaridian (ed), *The Karabagh File: documents and facts on the question of Mountainous Karabagh 1918-1988*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/Toronto: Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, 1988, and D M Lang, *The Armenians: a people in exile*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1981.

The Russian imperial government and the early Bolsheviks were able to use the Armenian question in their negotiations with the Persians and the Turks; this sometimes drew into the arena interested European powers such as the Germans and the British, as in the first two decades of this century. In Azerbaijan, however, with a sizeable number of Armenians in places such as Baku, for example, hostilities between the Armenian and Azerbaijanian communities erupted in the most horrific bloodbaths, particularly in 1905 and 1918 where eye-witness accounts put the number of dead above 20,000 in each community.⁵ The inter-ethnic conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, accompanied everywhere by bloodshed, whether in Baku, Tbilisi or in small villages, went on right up to the 1920s. Karabakh itself was sometimes at the centre of disputes between the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan, when in their brief period of independence both countries went to war over it. Then the Caucasus was overrun by the Bolsheviks, in which the Armenians dominated. (Interestingly, Azerbaijanis were a minority among the famous 'twenty-six Baku Commissars', communists killed by anti-Bolsheviks who had temporarily regained the upper hand in the region and were under British protection.) It was agreed that Karabakh would be returned to the newly formed Soviet Armenian jurisdiction but this decision was discarded.

The reversal of the decision forms the historical root of the present conflict and it is this which the Armenians are contesting. The most serious impediment to the proper discussion of the case of jurisdiction over Karabakh is that the documents relating to the final decision have remained secret. Presumably representatives of the Bolshevik and Turkish governments made an agreement in secret affecting the jurisdiction and status of three, if not four regions: Ajaria in Soviet Georgia (capital Batumi) which was given the status of Autonomous Republic, Nakhichevan which was to be under Soviet Azerbaijan jurisdiction, Nagorno-Karabakh under Soviet Azerbaijan and, possibly, *Saingilo* (its Georgian name), inhabited by Muslim Georgians which also was made part of Soviet Azerbaijan.

⁵ See Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*; C J Walker, *Armenia: the survival of a nation*, London: Croom Helm, 1980; F Kazamzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, New York/Oxford: The Philosophical Library; Fasad-Bey, *Blood and Oil in the Orient*, London: Nash & Grayson, 1931; R Hovanissian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918*, Berkeley, California/London: University of California Press, 1967; R Hovanissian, *The Republic of Armenia*, volumes 1 and 2, Berkeley, California/London: University of California Press, 1971 and 1982. There is extensive literature on Armenia of this period. See also T Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920: the shaping of national identity in a Muslim community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Until now, neither the Turkish nor the Soviet governments have allowed access to the relevant archives. It is thus extremely frustrating for scholars to have to rely on informed guesses and oral sources. Presumably, too, the lack of documentation has resulted in the kind of speculations which have fuelled misunderstandings and unrest. The *Karabagh File* itself can only cite secondary sources for how a decision taken on 3 July 1921 to attach Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia should be reversed two days later on 5 July 1921.⁶ According to this source written in 1968 in Erevan, the decisions were made by the 'plenary session of the Caucasian Bureau of Soviet Russia's Communist Party Central Committee composed of Kirov, Makharsatian (Armenian), Nasikain (Armenian), Nazaretian (Armenian), Narimanov (Azerbaijani), Stalin, Orakhelashvili, Orzhonikidze, and others'.⁷

The same *Karabagh File* reproduced an original document of 19 June 1921, insofar as it is the headline of an official Soviet journal of the time, stating '[m]ountainous Karabagh attached to Armenia. The agreement in accordance with Azerbaijan's declaration'.⁸

In the absence of the relevant archives all the literature since then has sought to clarify the reasons for the reversal of the earlier decision. In the most recent publication to date, Claire Mouradian writes that Stalin first promised Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenians in order to win them over to Bolshevik rule and, once he had secured it, he then reversed the decision in order to seduce Kemal Ataturk and the Muslim world.⁹

Although Stalin has been implicated in the decision to put Nagorno-Karabakh under Azerbaijani rule, it should be remembered that at the time he was responsible for internal ethnic relations and not for foreign relations. This points to the possibility of a secret accord between Lenin and Kemal Ataturk, the favourite theory of many Soviet historians. This is the subject of oral as opposed to written discussion and as yet cannot be substantiated through reproducing archival evidence. It is also a supposition which Armenians use in their arguments to show how closely the Turks identified their interests with the Azerbaijanis, and vice versa. In their view it supplies proof of the aggressive designs of the Azerbaijanis towards the Armenian people, echoing Turkish

⁶ Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, p 36.

⁷ Hrand Avetisyan, *The Communist Youth League of Transcaucasia under the Flag of Proletarian Internationalism* (in Armenian), Yerevan, no publisher named, 1968.

⁸ Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, p 36.

⁹ 'Arménie-Diaspora: mémoire et modernité', a collection of articles in *Les Temps Modernes*, July, August, September (504, 505, 506) 1988, pp 138-139.

attitudes of earlier in this century. An indisputable fact is that Lenin was optimistic about the future of Turkey and admired Kemal Ataturk, and it is not beyond reason to believe that he responded positively to Ataturk's requests concerning the three or four above-named regions. It has been suggested (in my discussions with Soviet historians) that Lenin's agreement might not have pleased his comrades Stalin and even Orjonikidze who at the time was head of all Transcaucasia and the most powerful Bolshevik in the region. Orjonikidze, however, was intent on creating a Transcaucasian Federation in which all regional boundaries would be abolished. In view of this, Lenin might have been less reluctant to grant Kemal Ataturk's request than otherwise.

Possibly, too, Ataturk on his part believed that with time the fortunes of the Turks in their battles with Russia would be reversed and that it would be easier for him to seize areas already having special status. The Azerbaijanis, whose sympathies the Turks had not been able to count on invariably, were nevertheless to be the beneficiaries in most of the disputed areas, but it is widely believed by historians that the status of Ajara within Soviet Georgia was also part of the agreement reached between Kemal Ataturk and Lenin.

Alternatively, the reversal of the decision concerning Nagorno-Karabakh might have taken place in the light of what the Russian and other non-Armenian Bolsheviks thought were advantages following previous agreements, some of which were made during the First World War when Lenin negotiated Russia's withdrawal with Germany and Turkey. This is certainly a familiar story for all countries with a legacy of colonialism and empire where border decisions were made not *in situ* but in the designated centres of power.

A last guess (made by oral historians in unpublished materials) at the cause of the final decision concerning Nagorno-Karabakh could have been that certain Bolsheviks, Stalin in particular, might have seen it as an *ad hoc* punishment of Armenians in Karabakh who had staged an anti-Bolshevik uprising. This argument is not put forward frequently and again is not substantiated by documentation of any sort. Soviet Azerbaijanis themselves usually state that the reason why they were allocated these territories was because they were 'historically' or 'really' theirs and that the Soviet government eventually 'saw reason', although Armenians had been the most prominent participants in the Bolshevik movement in the Caucasus.¹⁰ Again, until the archives are opened there is no available evidence to substantiate the claim to 'see reason' even if

¹⁰ See BBC monitoring document SU/0011121B. Internal Affairs BB/1.

historical arguments as to whom the territories 'belonged to historically' can be entered in a more scholarly way.

In October 1921 the treaty of Kars was signed, finalising the boundaries between Turkey and the Soviet State and those between the three Transcaucasian Soviet Republics. The present controversies surrounding the treaty stem from the lack of background documentation. They also raise questions pertinent to the analysis of relations between concepts of State and Nation.

Soviet Armenians did not give up their claims. It has been reported that Beria himself killed an Armenian First Secretary who demanded the return of Karabakh in the 1930s.¹¹ There have been demonstrations and petitions,¹² for example, a large rally in 1974 of Armenians demanding the return of Karabakh, and other protests ever since.

What is new in the events of 1988 is that tanks have not been used so readily as before, telephone lines have been more efficient than ever before and so the outside world, through the Armenian diaspora in particular, has been better informed and the demonstrations have gone on for longer than ever before in Soviet times.

The structures

What are the consequences for Armenians and Azerbaijanis in present times of the fact that the Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh is within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan?

The structures with direct relevance to the question are principally those of a centralised, 'totalitarian-type' political and administrative system with a command economy coupled with a given set of regional and national policies. They appear throughout the Soviet Union and any differences result solely from local *ad hoc* variations in the way these uniform structures are responded to. Therein lie many of the problems which Gorbachev has inherited but which he is as yet unable to deal with, any more than his predecessors were able to.

When the outlying nations, following their secession from Russia when the Tsarist Empire had collapsed, were incorporated into the Soviet Union they were given local administrative jurisdiction within a general, centralised, Soviet framework. All overriding decisions would be taken in Moscow and the Union republics would all have the same

¹¹ Oral communication, Soviet historian.

¹² See petition to Khrushchev in Libaridian *The Karabagh File*, p 42.

legislation and fulfil roughly the same administrative duties. On the other hand, each republic would use its national language, regional administrators would be appointed from the republic's capital and decisions made in Moscow concerning economic production and consumption would be processed and redirected to the regions through each republic's Communist Party organs. All this was done in order to cater to the sensitivities of peoples whose sovereignty was to be curtailed by Russia once again.

Let us take one example of the grievances of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians which impels them to seek transfer to Soviet Armenian jurisdiction: the language of education. It is not only the Azerbaijanis who insist that secondary education, if not in Russian, should be in the Azerbaijani language throughout the territory within their borders. The Abkhaz-speaking minority in Georgia is obliged to abandon instruction in its own language beyond primary school. The Tajiks must study in Uzbek in the predominantly Tajik-inhabited border area of Uzbekistan (an early Soviet border decision fiercely resented and which could be loudly contested if the Kremlin appeared willing to reconsider any republic's borders which had been arbitrarily drawn by Lenin and Stalin). The question of the language of education is vexing for Armenians in Azerbaijan and this vexation irritates the Azerbaijanis, a point to be discussed later. Suffice it to say here that there is not much room within the Soviet Constitution for flexibility and generosity concerning the choice of language used in education. After four years of primary school, the language of instruction must be Russian or the official language of the republic. What could have taken place, but has not, was the issuing of a decree from Moscow changing this pattern throughout the Soviet Union, in view of the ever-present resentment it engenders.

The administration of all republics consists of local people in the region and 'overlords' appointed from the capital, from among the Communist Party elites. Although these 'overlords' usually, although not invariably, originate from the same ethnic group as the local people, possessing at least an Armenian surname, for example, the situation still remains awkward. Often when an administrator of such a high level is appointed to the region by the Baku government the locals still resent him, thinking he must have compromised his ethnic identity in order to reach his high position.

The most serious problems of Nagorno-Karabakh have been economic. Regional economic development occurs in a series of stages: first, overall central planning takes place in Moscow, then the Central Com-

mittee in the capital of each republic responds to the directives received. It develops specific strategies it can demonstrate to be viable for fulfilling the directives. Where there is room for manoeuvre, and this would be the case regarding regional economic policy for Nagorno-Karabakh, for example, either greater or lesser resources can be allocated within the set limits. The Soviet system has a command economy, not a system of elastic responses to demand. The Azerbaijani Republic's authorities, Azerbaijani-dominated and unsympathetic to Armenians, particularly to those who demand secession from Azerbaijan, have apparently been extremely reluctant to allocate the funds and resources necessary for economic development in the region and to reorganise their management accordingly. It is also true that individual Armenians in other areas, such as Baku, have acquired relatively remarkable prosperity, as did their ancestors in pre-Soviet times, who had formed a large part of the Baku bourgeoisie. (If historical memory has any effect on ethnic relations today, then it is a factor which Azerbaijanis, who had formed the majority of the impoverished workforce then, are perhaps likely to remember in class terms. It is not an argument that I personally find very convincing.) It should be noted, however, that Sumgait, where the February 1988 atrocities took place, is a city with severe housing problems and a large population of unprosperous Azerbaijani workers,¹³ a situation not without dire consequences, as it is anywhere.

In the Soviet economic system there is not room for much individual enterprise, at least until the new reforms take effect. The Armenian residents of Nagorno-Karabakh are convinced that decisions taken centrally in Baku have been directly responsible for the lack of development in particular areas of the regional economy. This is at least one field where the Moscow authorities could intervene energetically and where the Azerbaijani officials in Baku could demonstrate their goodwill by alleviating some of the pressures that have given rise to such bitter complaints.

There is, however, a further grievance which arises directly out of the general Soviet system in all areas. The need for social networks is intense when personal recommendations are needed to meet unending bureaucratic requirements. The average person needs patronage and personal networks to obtain approval, in the form of written 'permissions', from administrators for the wide range of activities for which

¹³ Charles Urjewicz, 'Sumgait: le baracche e l'odio' ('Sumgait: shanty towns and hatred') in *Il Manifesto*, 21 May 1988.

they are required, from sending a son to a technical college to building an outhouse in a courtyard.¹⁴ This style of administration has advantages for 'permissions' coming within the scope of local officials but it is tricky when the 'permission' required is so important as to need the participation of a high-ranking official from the republic's dominant, and sometimes hostile, ethnic group.

In a situation of widespread shortages information and influence are needed to obtain otherwise very scarce goods, and these include many almost basic foodstuffs, clothing and so on. In a sharply divided society, these social networks are unlikely to cross the ethnic barriers, although there are some exceptions where friendships have been consciously formed. This not only entrenches ethnic boundaries in a country which has witnessed increasing uniformity in many aspects of lifestyle, but it also inevitably encourages ethnic rivalry and resentment. This is particularly so between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, with accusations of injustice on either side.

An instance of others' jealousy towards the Armenians (rather than the reverse) is the way they have sometimes been *perceived* to have used their patterns of emigration to their advantage. For example, there are many more Armenians in Moscow than there are Azerbaijanis. Many Armenians have risen to key positions of power and it is thought that they have more access to the press, for instance the academic press, than other minorities. It has been possible for articles to be published on subjects such as fifth-century history which particularly flatter the Armenian point of view. Yet in the Soviet system there have been strict controls on publications until very recently: there has been a 'first come, first served' policy in such matters insofar as there has been no right of reply to the original article. Should Georgian or Azerbaijani specialists want to refute (in the same influential journal) Armenian claims they find offensive, they cannot do so because the authorities have been afraid that the reply would be provocative and unbrotherly and would not portray the socialist love and respect among nations which the Soviet Union was supposed to have established.

It is ironic that there were, in Sumgait, several 'clubs of friendship between nations', including one of the largest in the republic.¹⁵ If Armenians and Azerbaijanis ever found themselves under the same roof in these clubs and spoke together, there would be no forum for genuine discussion of racial prejudice or ways in which conflict could be avoid-

¹⁴ See T Dragadze, *Rural Families in Soviet Georgia*, London: Routledge, 1988.

¹⁵ Urjewicz, 'Sumgait: le baracche e l'odio'.

ed. This is not untypical of other countries, but a complete refusal to acknowledge any tensions is never fruitful, certainly not in Azerbaijan, with a history of such volatile sensibilities.¹⁶

Finally, the *propiska* system (obligatory residence permits) in the Soviet Union precludes the possibility of easily 'voting with your feet'. With strict requirements for obtaining residence permits and with ubiquitous housing shortages, a dissatisfied Armenian in Nagorno-Karabakh cannot simply move to Armenia, even if he or she wants to. When the mismanagement of the region, however, is seen as a deliberate attempt to prompt the local population to move, staying on can also be a form of defiance and resistance.

The sentiments

The conflict over the jurisdiction of Nagorno-Karabakh has arisen within a particular political economic framework. The confines of that framework have fostered sentiments which have engendered and sustained animosity of a virulent nature. It would be wrong to suggest that the Azerbaijanis and Armenians are any different from other ethnic groups in this respect. In other words, they cannot be said to be more belligerent, as far as one can refer to the vague notion of 'national character'. The particular position of the Armenians, with a very articulate and large diaspora within the Soviet Union and outside, has allowed for special expression of their anger over what they see as justifiable border disputes.¹⁷

Most important for understanding the sentiments other than in terms of wrangles over whether something decided in the nineteenth century or in 1921 was right or wrong, is to learn what kind of self-image the Armenians and Azerbaijanis hold of their ethnic identity and what, in general terms only, of course, their stereotype images of each other might be.

1) The Armenians

Genuine scholars who write about the Armenians always marvel, with justification, that they have survived at all and maintained a separate national identity. Unlike their northern neighbour Georgia, for example a nation which lost her sovereignty only in 1802, the Armenians had been subject to the most various and volatile subjugation to other

¹⁶ C Mouradian, 'Conflicts nationaux en Transcaucasie', in *L'autre Europe* (10), 1986.

¹⁷ See 'URSS: le reveil arménien' in *Le Point* (Paris), 13 March 1988.

empires, particularly since the Middle Ages and sheer survival has had to be an end in itself.

It is interesting to note that, although within the USSR and ultimately Moscow-dominated, the Soviet Republic of Armenia is the first settled and firmly bordered territory governed by Armenians for many centuries. This is a fact which they treasure and which has attuned them to impulses emanating from Moscow in a more positive way than is the case in some of the other republics. They also adhere fiercely to the notion that their territory is genuinely Armenian and sovereign, not some fictional region in a Russian-Soviet empire. Even though they are within the borders of the Soviet Union as a whole, the territorial boundaries of Soviet Armenia are more than a mere formality. Armenian history and Armenian culture are at stake.

There are few universal principles which apply to the survival of particular national groupings and the demise of others. For Armenians, however, an awareness of their ancient history, of a remarkable language and alphabet and, since the fourth-century, their own Christian church have inspired them with the pride that could spur them to the brave deeds necessary for their survival and for the persistence needed to maintain their identity.

Stereotypes rarely accord with reality, but although compelled to acknowledge their ancient pedigree, ethnic groups hostile to the Armenians view them as arrogant and greedy. Their assertiveness, sometimes interpreted by others as snobbish superiority, has irritated their neighbours, whether justifiably or not, and therein lies part of the Armenians' unenviable predicament.

2) The Azerbaijanis

Unlike the case of the Armenians, Soviet Azerbaijani ethnic identity is a more complex issue, which the Armenians have sometimes tended to exploit. (I refer here to the *Soviet* Azerbaijanis in order to avoid the issue of the Azerbaijanis of Iran.) Until the Middle Ages, the territory which now coincides, in most part, with Soviet Azerbaijan was inhabited by indigenous Caucasian peoples and included the Caucasian Albanian Christian kingdom. (These Albanians are not to be confused with those in the Balkans.) A glance at a historical map, however, will remind one that these parts of the Near East, the Caucasus included, were invaded by Turkic peoples from Central Asia in the Middle Ages. The territory of Azerbaijan came under various imperial jurisdictions, sometimes 'Turkic', sometimes Persian (with whom present-day Azer-

baijanis share Shia Islam and not Sunni Islam which is that of the Turks).

Today Soviet Azerbaijanis insist that although Turkish invasions obliterated the use of Caucasian languages and also imposed Islam, the native population is genetically and culturally linked to their Caucasian ancestors.¹⁸ This view is encouraged by the Soviet authorities who, since Stalin's time, have sought to sever the links of peoples within their borders with those outside. It also permits the Azerbaijanis to claim a heritage just as ancient as their other main Caucasian neighbours, Georgia and Armenia. They see themselves as the descendants of the first Zoroastrians, of the great architects and craftsmen of Caucasian Albania whose art has enthralled archaeologists and scholars. The region also witnessed the flourishing of Sufism and Islamic civilisation, facts which today they attribute to the richness of their previous culture before Islamisation.

Against this view of themselves however, other ethnic groups, particularly the Armenians, have asserted that if the historical facts are examined, the reason why the present-day Soviet Azerbaijanis are Turkish-speaking, Muslim and Turkey-sympathisers (at least in 1920) is that they are none other than the descendants of the Turkish tribesmen who massacred all the indigenous peoples in the area.

So in order to legitimise themselves as genuine Caucasians, as rightful heirs of an ancient civilisation, the Soviet Azerbaijanis would have to provide casualty statistics to demonstrate how few Caucasians were massacred by the Turks over the centuries and how, genetically, they had little in common with Turks. This humiliating exercise is not to their liking. In response to the negative stereotype of Azerbaijanis as 'Azeri Turks' (backward usurpers of a territory gained through violent conquest) the Azerbaijanis despair.

In the Soviet period, moreover, they have had experience of a nationhood of their own. Their newly acquired status has emboldened them to fight fiercely for the territory granted to them by their Soviet overlords. They would consider it unthinkable to cede any territory which they view as theirs to another republic. Ethnic minorities might live in enclaves everywhere, but that would not be regarded as justification for 'giving' the place to the minority's country of origin. The strength of their sentiments over the issue is striking. Perhaps the nature of Soviet Azerbaijani feeling can best be illustrated by stating that for

¹⁸ See Dj B Guliev (ed), *Istoria Azerbajjana*, Baku: Elm Publishers, 1979

them the Armenians' demand appears as absurd as if the People's Republic of China demanded sovereignty over Soho in London just because there was a majority of residents of Chinese origin there.

The Azerbaijanis view that they too have been loyal Soviet citizens and have transformed their economy, exporting from their republic nearly all air-conditioning machines in the Soviet Union and safe-guarding the Soviet oil rigs along the Caspian, although these have decreased in importance in recent years. They consider that they have also contributed most vigorously to Soviet art and scholarship.¹⁹ They see it as an insult that minorities within their borders, such as the Armenians, have refused to accept the national language. It is true that Azeri Turkish is remarkably close to the Turkish of Turkey, but that is not their concern since they see it merely as an accident of history with little consequence for their national identity. The Armenians complain that the Azerbaijanis have taken their own particular ethnic identity too far:

In 1920 the Republic of Soviet Azerbaijan was established . . . The Leninist Bolsheviks under V I Lenin were most concerned with the creation of favourable conditions to unify the people of the region and also the rapid development of Baku's oil industry . . . It was in this fashion that multinational Azerbaijan came to the fore (and *not* the Turkish national Soviet republic) where all nationalities including the Russians, Armenians, Turks, Persians, Kurds, Georgians and Daghestanis were equally 'Azerbaijanis' only in the sense they were residents of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. Since then, however, the Turks of Azerbaijan have come to dominate the republic . . .²⁰

This same memorandum earlier stated that in 1920 'The Turks, who were previously called "Mountainous Tatars" [by whom, is not said] started to be called "Azerbaijani"'.²¹ Faced with this, the outrage of the Azerbaijanis is predictable. It appears on the surface, at least, that they think that if the Armenians believe them to be so savage, then they will act accordingly. Crude are the sentiments involved and tragic the consequences of communal hatred. Further analysis is desperately needed once more data becomes available.

Ethnic pride and territorial sovereignty are the two themes that dominate all others in the conflict. The differences in religion between Christ-

¹⁹ See, for example, T S Veliev *et al*, *Ocherki Istorii Azerbaidzhanskoy ekonomicheskoy mysli* (*Studies in the History of Azerbaijani Economic Thought*), Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1987.

²⁰ Libaridian, *The Karabagh File*, p 81-82; memorandum by Surem Ayyazian to General Secretary M S Gorbachev, 5 March 1987.

²¹ *Ibid* p 81.

ian and Muslim are not in themselves an issue except when they are used in an inferior-superior comparison and when they are enlisted to gain the sympathy of outsiders. As yet the conflict has not engendered any visible or vocal bloc alliances among the Soviet nations: it would be simplistic to expect that the Central Asian Muslims would all side with the Azerbaijanis and the Baltic peoples, Georgians and Russians with the Armenians. Within the Muslim community, the divisions between Shia and Sunnis override many other unifying principles. Some Sunni Kurds have preferred allegiance to the Armenians than to the Shiite Azerbaijanis.²² Some Central Asians are sympathetic to the idea of border changes. People in the Baltic states are sympathetic to Armenian protestors in some cases, but worried that the *débâcle* should not bring to a halt the fulfilment of their own aspirations. In neighbouring Georgia, a recent report²³ highlights the uneasiness of the Azerbaijanis, who held under virtual house arrest Georgian students sent by Moscow to *Saingilo* to fraternise with the local inhabitants, and were totally frustrated in their endeavours. The Georgians are nevertheless nervous of Armenian claims to Southern Georgia. Rather, when confronted with the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, all Soviet nations view the duel and the umpire with growing consternation.

The present *impasse*

People not conversant with Soviet affairs sometimes expect that after seventy years of Sovietisation, ethnic and national assertiveness would be on the decline. It is my impression when I read some of the literature from before the Revolution that, paradoxically, ethnic assertiveness has increased. This is not only in response to threats of attempts at Russification of the minorities or, for the Russians, the weakening by the Bolsheviks of Russian culture itself. Apart from the deportations by Stalin based on ethnic grouping alone, the density of ethnic self-consciousness in more recent years has been nurtured by Soviet society itself. The regime has continually demanded of its intellectuals and artists at every level to express patriotism as the dominant ideology. With the obvious gaps between Soviet official ideology and everyday life,²⁴ those with the task in hand have resorted to awaken sentiments which are known to be always present, those of ethnic and local national pride. Every tree and landscape,

²² C Mouradian in 'Arménie-Diaspora: mémoire et modernité', *Les Temps Modernes*, p 135.

²³ *Literaturuli Sakartvelo*, 7 October 1988.

²⁴ See T Dragadze, *Rural Families in Soviet Georgia*, p 32.

every mother and child is extolled in local national terms. With virtually 100 per cent literacy and with an emphasis on the role of history as a unifying and inspiring factor, disputes over heritage and culture become pressing and urgent. Thus, even political malpractice and manoeuvres (such as the demise of the former Azerbaijani party boss, Aliiev, accused of major corruption) are interpreted by the aggrieved party in ethnic terms.

These ethnic divisions could easily be exploited, as they have so often been in other parts of the world, where imperial governments have used the 'divide and rule' method to increase their power. One can wonder, therefore, if there are advantages in the conflict to be gained for the powers-that-be in the Russian-dominated Soviet government in Moscow.

Despite the fact that Russians alone can be trusted by both sides to intervene in the Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute and re-establish order (surely an advantage with the first timid demands for national sovereignty to be heard now in some other Union republics), the dispute is at present a great embarrassment to the Soviet government. Much is to be gained by the conservatives in the government if they can show that *glasnost* has rendered two republics ungovernable, justifying a clamp-down on the intellectual freedoms which the Soviet people as a whole have just begun to enjoy. It is true that people everywhere would find it unacceptable if there were to be worse race riots in Transcaucasia. On the other hand, it would be difficult for most Soviet people, and many outsiders too, if the demands by the Armenians for the transfer of jurisdiction of Nagorno-Karabakh to Soviet Armenia backfired. However justifiable they believe their demands to be, it would appear unforgivable to others if these demands became the Achilles heel of the drive towards greater freedom and reforms necessary to increase material as well as spiritual prosperity in a large country where laws and regulations are likely to be applied uniformly in all Soviet republics.

In the Third World, where so many problems have been attributed to capitalism and economic imperialism, these problems have allegedly been exacerbated by the border disputes which are still the legacy of arbitrary decisions taken by those in control at some distance from the actual areas. So were borders decided in the Soviet Union, but it has come as a surprise to many outsiders that such territorial disputes should arise with the fierceness we have now witnessed in Soviet Transcaucasia. Perhaps the relationship between structures and sentiments is not solely an articulation of underlying economic themes. People familiar with those mountainous lands have long expected that particular sentiments would eventually erupt and be regrettably expressed.

Japan's oil diplomacy: *tatemae* and *honne*

Japan is dependent on foreign sources for 80.9 per cent of its energy needs, and most of that comes from the Middle East. Persian Gulf oil supplies about 60 per cent of Japan's energy needs while a total of 70 per cent comes from the Middle East in general. No country imports more oil from the Persian Gulf than Japan; in 1987 half the oil that passed through the Strait of Hormuz went directly to Japan. At any one time there are about twenty Japanese owned or operated tankers in the Gulf; five pass through Hormuz on an average day.¹

Japan's energy dependence on the Middle East became dramatically apparent during the quadrupling of oil prices by OPEC and the oil embargo imposed by the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) during late 1973 and 1974. The result for Japan was double-digit inflation and its first trade deficit since 1964. The further doubling of oil prices by OPEC in 1979, and the recent attacks on neutral shipping in the Persian Gulf— at least seven Japanese oil tankers were attacked in 1987— underline the vulnerability of Japan's energy needs to Middle East politics.

Japan's policy towards the Middle East can be explained by two Japanese words: *tatemae* and *honne*. *Tatemae* is the mask of idealistic rhetoric and symbolic actions with which one hides *honne*—one's true feelings and actions. In principle (*tatemae*), Tokyo responded to the 1973 embargo by abandoning its neutral position in the Arab-Israeli conflict to side with the Palestinians, while embarking on an active policy of diversifying its foreign oil sources. In reality (*honne*), Japan's Middle East policy has shifted only rhetorically; in terms of such measures as UN votes, foreign aid, and public statements not much has changed since before 1973. Likewise, in the same period, Tokyo's diversification programme has diminished Japanese dependence on Middle East oil from 75 per cent to 70 per cent only, while Japanese exports to the Middle East as a percentage of its total exports have risen from about 5 per cent in the mid-1970s to about 12 per cent at present.²

¹ *The Economist*, 11 July 1987, p 54.

² *Ibid*

This study attempts to disentangle the *honno* of Japanese diplomatic and economic policy to the Middle East from its *tatema*. Until 1973 Japanese foreign policy was based on the principle of separating economic from political issues (*seikei bunri*). Internationally, Japan kept as low a political profile as possible, avoiding taking a stand on any controversial issues, while maximising its economic expansion into overseas markets. Since 1973, Tokyo has adopted a policy which later came to be described as comprehensive security (*sogo anzen hoshō*) that implicitly recognises the reality that economic problems soon lead to political problems, and vice versa. Comprehensive security depends on actively using diplomatic initiatives and economic policies to reduce Japan's dependence on foreign sources of raw materials and energy through diversification while at the same time making those foreign sources dependent on Japanese goods, services and capital.

But how different are the policies of *seikei bunri* and comprehensive security really? How different have Japanese foreign aid, UN votes, or diplomatic ties to the Middle East been since 1973? What domestic and foreign interests compete to shape Tokyo's responses to Middle East crises? Finally, how successful has its policy to the Middle East been in furthering Japanese national interests?

Japan's involvement in the Middle East: 1946–1973

Few democratic industrial nations have enjoyed as smooth and consistent a foreign policy-making regime as has Japan. Japanese politics are dominated by a conservative, interdependent elite composed of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), bureaucracy, and corporate world which has succeeded in maintaining a majority in the National Assembly (Diet), and thus the prime ministership, for all but nine months since 1945. Stockwin succinctly describes the relationship between the legs of the governing triad:

... the LDP depended upon the bureaucracy for technical expertise and legislative initiative; the bureaucracy depended upon the LDP for parliamentary majorities in favour of government legislation, and for jobs on retirement; the LDP depended upon big business for electoral funding; big business depended upon the LDP for political backing, advantageous policies, and political stability; big business depended upon bureaucracy for favours in the drawing up and implementing of legislation (and more broadly in the exercise of bureaucratic discretion); the bureaucracy depended upon big business for jobs on retirement.³

³ J A A Stockwin *et al.*, *Dynamic and Immobilist Politics in Japan*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

Since the late 1940s it has been clear to these policy-makers that the foundation of Japan's foreign policy should rest on relations with the United States. Access to the vast markets of the US and security under its nuclear umbrella was seen as the best way to fulfil Japan's goals of rapid economic revival and modernisation. Only Washington was powerful enough to rebuild a prosperous world economy and sponsor Japan's place in it. The US occupation imposed far-reaching reforms that formed the basis for Japan's present economic dynamism; the 1952 Security Treaty allowed Japan to concentrate on economic development rather than divert key resources to rearmament; and Washington successfully overcame the resistance of other countries to Japan's membership in international economic organisations such as GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in 1955 and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1964.

By the mid-1960s, Tokyo's reliance on the United States was dramatically paying off. Japan had emerged as an economic superpower with the world's third largest GNP. Japanese consumer goods were flooding US markets and Japan had replaced both the USA and western Europe as east Asia's largest trade partner. Elsewhere Japanese companies were steadily expanding their market shares despite often formidable trade barriers. There seemed to be no significant economic or political obstacles to Japan's continued economic expansion and enrichment.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Tokyo was successful in maintaining relations with almost all countries without getting involved in regional conflicts. This *seikei bunri* policy was most clearly stated in a speech before the General Assembly in 1957 when the Japanese ambassador declared that Japan's foreign policy was based on three principles (*tatemaie*): adherence to UN consensus and ideals, cooperation with the democratic nations, and close identification with Asian nations. Through high-sounding but essentially empty rhetoric like this, Japan avoided foreign political entanglements while quietly expanding its economic presence around the world.

Japan's successful *seikei bunri* policy was epitomised in its relations with the Middle East before 1973. Although Japan had supported the Balfour Declaration in 1917 calling for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, voted in favour of the British mandate over Palestine at the San Remo Conference of 1920, and during World War II called for an Arab-Jewish struggle against British rule, there were no significant Japanese ties with the Middle East before the 1950s. After regaining its sov-

ereignty in 1952, Tokyo restored relations with Egypt, Turkey, and Iran that same year. In 1955 it opened a legation in Tel Aviv which was raised to embassy status in 1963. Despite growing economic ties it did not open an embassy in Saudi Arabia until 1960.

Japan's dependence on oil, particularly Middle East oil, expanded steadily with its economy. In 1950, domestic coal reserves served almost all Japan's energy needs; only 7 per cent of its energy depended on oil imports. But Japanese industry shifted rapidly from coal to oil after 1952 when a prolonged coal strike prompted the government to lift oil import barriers and the price of imported crude—already below that of domestically mined coal—began a sharp decline. By the mid-1960s, Japan ranked third in the world after the United States and Soviet Union in oil consumption and total refining capacity.⁴

Because Middle East production costs were so low and its reserves so abundant, Japan soon became dependent on the Middle East for about 75 per cent of its petroleum needs. By 1962 Japan was the most important oil market for the Middle East after Britain and the leading customer for Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. By 1973, Japan was the main importer of Middle East oil. During this time Japan's dependence on cheap foreign oil actually gave it an advantage over other industrial countries such as the USA which continued to use more expensive domestic reserves. The world price of oil dropped steadily parallel to, and helped fuel, Japan's economic growth: from \$2.30 per barrel in 1960, to \$1.90 in 1965, and \$1.80 in 1970.⁵

Although Japan continues to remain largely dependent on Western oil corporations for most of its imports, during the 1950s Tokyo succeeded in developing domestic oil companies and negotiating agreements with several Middle East governments that significantly reduced this dependence over the next three decades. In 1957 and 1958, Japan's Arabian Oil Company (AOC) signed agreements with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for offshore drilling rights in return for giving them respectively 56 per cent and 57 per cent of total profits. These agreements represented significant steps both for Japan and the Middle East to lessen their dependence on the oil majors. While the major oil companies split fifty-fifty with Middle East countries on extraction profits only, the AOC split total profits with its partners, including production, marketing,

⁴ F Shulman, 'Japanese Middle Eastern economic relations before the first oil shock', in R A Morse (ed), *Japan and the Middle East in Alliance Politics*, Washington: Wilson Center, 1985, p 19.

⁵ S Kimura, 'Japan's Middle-East policy: impact of the oil crisis', *Kobe University Law Review* (19) 1985, p 24.

transportation, and refining.⁶ But Tokyo's willingness to break with the West over conflicting interests in the Middle East started as early as 1953 when it secretly agreed to buy nationalised Iranian oil, and discarded the agreement only under US and British pressure.⁷

Meanwhile, Japan kept as low a political profile as possible over any Middle East crises before 1973. When called upon by the Arab league to take a stand on the 1956 war, Tokyo responded with the innocuous statement that the crisis should be settled according to the UN Charter and international law. The Foreign Ministry's September 1957 Blue Book clearly stated that Japan's regional interests were economic rather than political or humanitarian: '... it is desirable that peace be maintained in this area in order for commercial relations between Japan and the Middle East to make smooth progress.'⁸ Following the June 1967 war Japan again ducked demands from the Arab league that it take a stand, until 22 November 1967 when Tokyo announced its support of Resolution 242 demanding Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. But Tokyo balanced this by supporting Resolution 338 which recognised the rights of existence of all states, including Israel, while neglecting to discuss Palestinian rights. When three Japanese Red Army terrorists linked to the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) murdered twenty-six people and wounded seventy at the Tel Aviv Airport in May 1972 Tokyo gave \$700,000 to the victim's families to show its regret at the actions of Japanese citizens, even though they were enemies of the government. The last thing Tokyo wanted was to be linked, however tenuously, to regional politics. To avoid any disruptions from the Arab-Israeli conflict, Japan increasingly relied on Iran for as much of its oil imports as possible: by 1970 more than half of all its shipments through the Strait of Hormuz came from Iran. This policy of minimising its involvement in regional politics was symbolised by the Foreign Ministry's not creating a Middle East-Africa Section until 1961, and waiting until 1965 to make it a Bureau. Despite Japan's growing economic dependence, no prime minister or foreign minister visited the Middle East before the 1973 crisis.

The 1973 crisis

Although King Faisal of Saudi Arabia had clearly warned Japan during

⁶ P Odell, *Oil and World Power*, London: Penguin, 1980, p 146.

⁷ N Maruyama, 'Japan's Middle Eastern policy in a dilemma', *The Bulletin of the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies*, International University of Japan 2, 1986, p 267.

⁸ *Foreign Ministry Bluebook*, 1957.

a 1972 visit that continued adherence to US policies in the Middle East would have serious consequences, the 1973 oil shock came as a complete surprise to Tokyo policy-makers.⁹ OPEC had been formed in 1967 and OAPEC in 1968, but because of a world oil glut, constant political pressure from the industrialised countries, and divisions between moderates and radicals, neither organisation was effective either in raising prices or using oil as a political weapon before 1973. But the war which broke out on 6 October 1973 gave both OPEC and OAPEC the opportunity for unity they had been searching for. On 17 October at their meeting in Kuwait, OAPEC agreed on a 5 per cent production cut, increased by an additional 5 per cent each month until Israel withdrew, and placed an embargo on all exports to the USA.

Japanese consumers responded to the announced cuts with panic buying of many essential products. This panic was further fuelled when on 19 October the Arab ambassadors visited the Foreign Ministry and urged Japan to support the Arab position. The Foreign Ministry asked *for time to consider their request, and a week later handed the Saudi Arabian ambassador, 'A Statement of Japan's Position on the Fourth Middle East War'*, which included three key points: 1) Japan was against any forceful territorial expansion of any state; 2) therefore Japan would never recognise the annexation of Israeli territories taken in the 1967 War; and 3) any settlement must reflect the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. Meanwhile world energy prices continued to rocket while in Japan wholesale prices rose 20 per cent by the end of October because of panic buying, and by January 1974 were 30 per cent higher than the same time the previous year.¹⁰

On 4 November OAPEC agreed to further production cutbacks of 25 per cent, with an additional 5 per cent cut in December. They divided the world into three types of countries: friendly countries which were allowed their old production quotas; neutral countries which suffered the general cutbacks; and hostile countries against which a full embargo was imposed. The unfriendly countries included most of the industrial countries such as the USA, European Community, and Japan. The EC countries except for Holland responded two days later by calling for an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories. In return OAPEC granted the EC 'friendly' status on 18 November.

Tokyo initially reacted to being labelled 'unfriendly' with confusion

⁹ Y Kuroda, 'Japanese perceptions of the Arab world', in R A Morse (ed), *Japan and the Middle East*, p 31.

¹⁰ K I Juster, 'Foreign policy-making during the oil crisis', *Japan Interpreter*, 1977, p 199.

since it had been convinced that the *seikei bunri* policy would protect Japan's oil flow.¹¹ This confusion was compounded after OPEC granted 'friendly' status to the EC but continued to deny it to Japan. Had not Japan denounced Israel's occupation as strongly as the EC? What more was expected of Japan? Henry Kissinger increased the conflicting pressures on Tokyo during his visit on 14 November when he strongly urged Japan not to give in to Arab pressures, warning that to do so would jeopardise peace efforts. In return the Japanese asked for guaranteed oil supplies from the United States, and hinted that they might support the Arabs.¹² The government was split between Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira, who favoured supporting Washington's position, and Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, and the business community who urged a shift towards a pro-Arab position.

On the day the announcement that OPEC had changed the status of the EC, Ohira issued a statement reiterating Japan's neutral position, condemned Israel's continued occupation, and called for Palestinian rights. But pressures continued to build as the 'unfriendly' label stuck and Tokyo feared that its investments in the Middle East would be nationalised. Finally, on 22 November the government again announced that it supported, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242, no acquisition or occupation of foreign land by force; the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories; respect for all countries in the region; and recognition of Palestinian rights to self-determination.¹³ Essentially there was no substantive difference between the three official policy statements Tokyo had made since the crisis began, and OPEC recognised this by refusing to change Japan's 'unfriendly' status at its Algeria meeting on 24 November.

It was not until the Vice Prime Minister, Takeo Miki, travelled to eight Middle East countries (the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Syria, Iran, and Iraq) between 10 and 28 December pledging a reevaluation of Japanese policy to Israel and offering massive aid including 38 billion yen in credits to Egypt to widen the Suez Canal and 27.7 billion yen in government credits and 20.2 billion yen in private loans to Syria to build oil refineries, that a breakthrough was achieved. At a

¹¹ K Katakura, 'Narrow options for a pro-Arab shift. Japan's response to the Arab oil strategy in 1973', *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, 1986, p 119.

¹² M Caldwell, 'The dilemma of Japan's oil dependency', in R A Morse (ed), *The Politics of Japan's Energy Strategy*, Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1981, p 67.

¹³ S Kimura, 'Japan's Middle East policy', p 27.

meeting on 25 December, OAPEC finally granted Japan 'friendly' status, and cancelled its current 5 per cent cutback along with the January cutback of 10 per cent. Tokyo's policy shift was cemented by additional visits to the Middle East by high-ranking Japanese envoys. Former foreign minister, Zentaro Kosaka, visited eight other Middle East countries promising 12 billion yen to Algeria and 30 billion yen each to Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan in support of telecommunications projects. Nakasone visited Iran and Iraq giving credits of 74.5 billion yen to Iraq for construction of fertiliser and other plants, and a mixed loan to Iran equalling \$1 billion for an oil refinery project.¹⁴ In addition, Tokyo quickly set up the Middle East Cooperation Centre and Middle East Economic Research Institute which involved joint government-business relations.

The reasons for Japan's policy shift were clear. The immediate reason was the danger the oil embargo posed to Japan's continued economic dynamism and prosperity. But also important was the fear that Japan would be left behind if the USA suddenly reversed its position and recognised Palestinian self-determination. Tokyo had suffered the embarrassment of one 'Nixon shock' over China; it did not want to suffer another over the Middle East. Finally, regardless of what Washington did, there was a feeling that US power and influence was declining and the time had come for Japan to start asserting a more independent political position commensurate with its economic superpower status.¹⁵

In reality, despite the promise of increased aid, Japan's policy shift was more rhetorical and psychological than anything else. It was one thing to call for Palestinian rights, it was another to work actively to achieve them. As will be seen, Japanese support for the Palestinians has been largely symbolic. While Japan did take a dramatic step of independence from its previous lockstep with the United States, in so doing it revealed its vulnerability to economic pressure. Tokyo's diplomatic offensive showed it was interested only in its own economic interests, not regional political and humanitarian problems. This attitude was best revealed when Tokyo sent two special envoys and a cabinet minister to a region where no high-ranking officials had visited before.

Japan's new policy: 1973-present

In 1980 the prime minister, Zenko Suzuki, announced that Japan's

Ibid.

M Sasagawa, 'Japan and the Palestinians', *Journal of Arab Affairs* 3 (1) 1984, p 24

foreign relations would henceforth be based on the concept of comprehensive security. This concept recognises the reality that military power is only one dimension of a country's comprehensive security, and in an interdependent world is perhaps the least important. The foundation of a country's security is economic growth and stability which, in turn, is dependent on an expanding, open world economy. To guarantee Japan's continued prosperity Tokyo must actively try to diversify its foreign sources of energy, markets, and raw materials while at the same time make those sources dependent on Japanese exports of goods, services, and capital.

Both *seikei bunri* and comprehensive security share the goals of avoiding involvement, if possible, in any international political issues while maximising foreign economic expansion. But comprehensive security recognises the reality that, at times, political conflicts—and subsequent trade-offs—are unavoidable. Although the chances of getting entangled in an international conflict can be minimised through economic diversification, when Tokyo is forced to take a stand on a particular issue it can attempt to buy off any threat to its economic interests with idealistic rhetoric and aid promises. In this sense comprehensive security assigns Tokyo a more active diplomatic role dishing out aid and rhetoric while pursuing global economic diversification. Yet both policies aim at minimising the costs and maximising the benefits of Japan's membership in the world political economy.

But this comprehensive security policy was actually born seven years earlier when Tokyo responded to the oil embargo with a frantic burst of diplomatic initiatives to the Middle East. Since 1973 Tokyo has responded to each cycle of a new Middle East crisis in a familiar pattern. When torn between conflicting Arab and US demands over a particular crisis, Tokyo delays making a decision while buying time with periodic idealistic, ambiguous 'policy' statements. Finally, after the EC has announced its stand on the issue and the decision is received with favour by OPEC and resignation by Washington, Tokyo follows with a similar statement a short time later. Thus Tokyo diminishes the strains on its 'special relationships' with both the United States and OPEC. In between crises Japan makes periodic diplomatic gestures designed to satisfy OPEC while quietly expanding and diversifying its economic presence in both the Middle East and the world economy.

In a non-crisis environment Tokyo has been able to delay or reduce promises made during earlier crises. For example, Japan delayed the opening of a PLO office in Tokyo for almost three years after first

proclaiming its support for Palestinian self-determination. It was not until April 1976 that Farouk Kaddoumi, the director of the Political Bureau of the PLO was allowed to visit Japan to negotiate with the Prime Minister, Miki, and other Japanese leaders the terms under which a PLO office would be permitted to open. Tokyo forced the PLO to agree to limit the office to a non-diplomatic information status, denounce terrorism of all kinds, and sever its links with the Japanese Red Army. The PLO refused, however, to accept a mutual recognition of Israel.¹⁶

Until autumn 1979 and the Iranian hostage crisis, Japanese diplomats successfully walked the tightrope between making periodic statements in favour of Palestinian self-determination while supporting US diplomatic initiatives in the region. Takeo Fukuda became the first Japanese prime minister to visit the Middle East in September 1978 when he travelled to the UAE, Iran, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The diplomatic height of his tour occurred on 12 September in Saudi Arabia when he called for an Israeli withdrawal from Jerusalem and all other Arab territories.

Tokyo had to tack in a different diplomatic direction in March 1979 when it praised the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty as an important first step for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In a choice between the US-sponsored treaty and its denunciation by the Arab world, Japanese policy-makers realised that the diplomatic costs of supporting the Arab position were greater than those of supporting Washington. But, more importantly, peace between Egypt and Israel made the region slightly less unstable and thus helped protect Japan's economic interests. Tokyo offset this slight to the Arab world by establishing the Japan-Palestinian Parliamentarian's Friendship Association in June 1979 which was open to all Diet members and soon included a hundred parliamentarians. On 6 August 1979 the foreign minister, Sunao Sonoda, tried again to explain Japan's position before a gathering of ambassadors from all the Middle East countries except Egypt.

But Tokyo's carefully managed diplomacy was upset again during the Iranian hostage crisis starting in November 1979. Japan's economic stakes in Iran were huge: not only did it import 20 per cent of its oil from Iran but a conglomerate of over a hundred Japanese firms and twenty banks led by Mitsui had invested over \$2 billion in the Iran-Japan Petrochemical (UPC) project. Tokyo was torn between Wash-

¹⁶ M Yoshitsu, *Caught in the Middle East: Japan's diplomacy in transition*, Toronto: Lexington Books, 1984.

ington's increasing demands on its allies to support diplomatic and eventually economic reprisals against Iran for taking over the US embassy, and the need to protect its enormous economic interests in Iran, which were multiplied by OPEC's doubling of oil prices around that time.

At first Tokyo clearly came down in favour of its economic interests. Japan's government and oil companies bought up huge amounts of oil on the spot market, driving up world oil prices even higher. On 27 November 1979 the Japanese ambassador to the UN, Masahiro Niisori, declared that the right of self-determination meant the right for Palestinians to establish an independent state in the region. This statement was reaffirmed by the prime minister, Ohira, on 1 December.

On 10 December the US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, criticised Tokyo as being 'insensitive' and expressed his strong disappointment at Japan for continuing to buy Iranian oil on the spot market, for this both helped support the new fundamentalist regime and contributed to oil price increases that did not reflect actual shortages. Two days later Tokyo agreed to condemn the hostage-taking and urged Japanese companies not to buy any more Iranian oil on the spot market. But when on 16 January Washington asked Tokyo to join in economic sanctions against Iran, Japan refused for economic reasons. On 7 April Washington broke all ties with Iran, and asked its allies to do the same. Following the EC, Tokyo justified its own refusal to do so by stating that 'the problem of oil is vital for Japan'.¹⁷ Yet, Japan again followed suit later that month by finally agreeing to impose economic sanctions on 24 April after the EC had imposed similar sanctions two days earlier. Like the EC countries, Tokyo reduced the number of its embassy staff in Tehran and also imposed a total embargo on all exports to Iran except for food and medicine. Tokyo also stopped new contracts on construction projects with Iran. This limited allied trade embargo remained in force until the hostages were returned in January 1981. Clearly, Tokyo's policy was guided by its concrete economic interests rather than abstract appeals to international law, allied unity, or the dangers of appeasing aggression.

Japan's follow-the-leader diplomacy of the 1970s has given way in the 1980s to several diplomatic initiatives aimed at ameliorating Middle East conflicts. For reasons that remain unclear, Tokyo made a dramatic symbolic break with both the USA and the EC when on 21 October 1981 it became the first OECD government to host Yassar Arafat at a

¹⁷ M Sasagawa, 'Japan and the Palestinians', p 23.

semi-official function. This was little more than a half-year after the hostage crisis was finally resolved and only two years after the Iranian revolution and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan rocked the Middle East. Despite or perhaps because of these new threats to Japan's economic interests in the Middle East, the prime minister, Suzuki, met privately with Arafat while he was being hosted in Tokyo by the Japan-Palestinian Parliamentarian League (JPPL).

Tokyo has made a series of attempts to mediate the Iran-Iraq war since the foreign minister, Shintaro Abe, visited both countries in August 1983 (Abe was foreign minister from 1982-87). At the same time Tokyo offered to fund an expanded multinational force for Lebanon, and dispatch Japanese civilians to help peacekeeping activities in the Middle East. In May 1984 Mizuo Kuroda, Japanese ambassador to the UN, called on both Iran and Iraq and all other states to use restraint and respect international shipping rights. Four months later Abe met Iraq's deputy prime minister and Iran's foreign minister and called on Iraq to forego any further use of chemical weapons. He tried to elicit a pledge from them to allow free navigation in the Gulf, and an agreement by Iran to allow the dredging and reopening of Iraqi ports and harbours. Tokyo has periodically made similar diplomatic appeals for a reduction in the scope of the conflict ever since.

The focus of these diplomatic efforts has clearly been to reduce the threat to oil tankers in the Persian Gulf bound for Japan. Japan still receives over 60 per cent of its oil from the Persian Gulf compared with only seven per cent for the United States. At least seven Japanese ships were attacked in 1987. But despite these threats to its oil supplies, citing Article IX of its Constitution, which is interpreted to prohibit Japanese military operations abroad, Tokyo has refused to send any warships to join the allied fleet in the Gulf. When the prime minister, Nakasone, asked his Cabinet to consider sending a token force of Japanese coast-guard boats they refused saying it would be politically impossible. Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita has categorically ruled out posting any Japanese warships to the Gulf. The largest direct contribution Tokyo has made to defending Persian Gulf shipping has been a \$10 million navigation aid, although during his January 1988 visit to Washington Prime Minister Takeshita did promise President Reagan that Japan would pay the costs of Japanese workers at US bases in Japan, implicitly offsetting its lack of significant contribution to its allies in the Gulf.

How effective have Tokyo's various diplomatic initiatives in the 1980s been in strengthening the security of its economic interests in the Middle

East? Japan's diplomatic role has been described as that of a 'message carrier' rather than a genuine mediator.¹⁸ And even that role has not made Japan immune from attack—of the seven attacks on Japanese ships in 1987, four occurred in July, a month after the Japanese foreign minister's visit to both belligerents. Like many Japanese diplomatic initiatives elsewhere, whether on issues involving trade or military spending, Tokyo's actions in the Middle East have been of more symbolic than substantive importance. Comprehensive security involves making such gestures whether there is any chance of success or not.

And what do other diplomatic measures—such as aid or UN votes—reveal about the depth of Japan's post-1973 pro-Arab shift? Again Tokyo has been successful in selling the image of a significant shift in policy (*tatema*), while in reality (*honne*) there has been no substantive change. Although Japan's aid to the Middle East has increased substantially since 1973, reaching US\$ 200 million in 1983, this still represents only 10 per cent of its total foreign aid. And Tokyo has overwhelmingly favoured the moderate countries rather than taking a more even-handed approach. In 1983 two-thirds of its aid to the region went to only four countries—Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey—of which more than a third (US\$50 million) went to Egypt, the only frontline state of the four. (In the same year Saudi Arabia received US\$ 31 million.)¹⁹ And the old criticism of tied aid continues to haunt Japan's current aid programmes throughout the region. For example, in July 1984, the US Export-Import Bank accused Tokyo of offering Algeria heavily-subsidised export credits for Japanese equipment to supply a sophisticated telecommunications project. Although the US firms actually had a comparative advantage, Japan's tied aid tipped the bid to Japanese firms.²⁰

Japan's votes in the UN on Middle East issues reveals a similar split between stated principles and reality. While the number of votes Japan cast in favour of resolutions concerning the Middle East changed dramatically after 1973, they peak shortly after a crisis and most of their

¹⁸ M Yoshitsu, *Caught in the Middle East*, pp 13–14.

¹⁹ While Japan's aid to the Middle East increased from \$193 million to \$200 million between 1982 and 1983, its aid to Egypt fell from \$62 million to \$50 million over the same period. At the same time the figure for Sudan increased dramatically—from \$10 million to \$25 million—perhaps because of Sudan's growing importance as a potential chromium supplier to Japan. See J Moss and J Rivenhill, *Emerging Japanese Economic Influence in Africa: implications for the United States*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1985, p 83. (Aid figures supplied by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.)

²⁰ W Brooks, 'The politics of Japan's foreign aid to the Middle East', in R A Morse (ed), *The Politics of Japan's Energy Strategy*, p 86.

pro-Palestinian votes concern humanitarian and aid issues. Until then there was a close voting correlation between the United States and Japan. From 1966 to 1970, for example, Japan voted in favour of only 20 per cent of the resolutions on the Palestinian question and cast abstentions on the remaining 80 per cent.

Since then, however, following the lead of the EC, Tokyo votes on humanitarian or Palestinian rights, but either abstains from or votes against any resolutions that would dramatically change the status quo in the Middle East, or are too one-sided, or which would deny Israeli sovereignty. From 1971–75 Japan voted in favour of 19 (65.5 per cent) out of 29 resolutions concerning the Middle East, and cast abstentions on 10 (34.5 per cent). Most of its favourable votes occurred during and after the 1973 crisis. During the next two five-year periods Japan's favourable votes remained about the same percentage of the total, 34 (55.7 per cent) of 61 resolutions (1976–80) and 72 (59.0 per cent) of 132 resolutions (1981–85), while its abstentions were 27 (44.3 per cent) and 45 (36.9 per cent), respectively. From 1966–85, of 234 resolutions Japan voted in favour of 142, abstained on 87, and voted only against five.²¹

Recently, Tokyo took a small step away from most EC countries to vote in favour of a resolution on 2 December 1987 condemning Israel as the main obstacle to peace in the Middle East. Japan had abstained in a similar resolution a year earlier.²² But the possibility that this vote indicated a shift in policy directly against Israel was reversed in June 1988 when Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno visited Tel Aviv; the first ever visit to Israel by a Japanese foreign minister. Diplomacy, not economic relations, was the primary reason for the visit; Japanese-Israeli trade was valued at \$800 million in 1987, a fraction of the almost \$30 billion worth of trade between Japan and the Middle East.²³ Instead Uno tried to act as diplomatic middleman between Israel and the Palestinians, in a manner similar to Tokyo's previous shuttles between Baghdad and Tehran.

Here was yet another example of Japanese diplomatic *tatemaie*. In reality, Uno's visit was an attempt to assuage the growing concern among Israelis and Jews elsewhere, particularly in the United States, about the deepening and highly emotional anti-Semitism that has swept Japan in recent years, fuelled largely by several best-selling books that

²¹ T Urano, *Kokusai Shakai No Henyo to Kokuren Taisho Kodo*, March 1987, p 635.

²² 'Resolutions and decisions adopted by the UNGA', UN press release, 15 September 1986 19 December 1987.

²³ IMF directions of trade, 1982 87.

purport to reveal a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. Tokyo is worried that the powerful Jewish lobby in the USA will eventually react against growing Japanese anti-Semitism by rallying behind domestic protectionist forces which are retaliating against Japan's continuing huge trade surpluses with the United States. In sending Uno to Israel, Tokyo weighed the possible advantageous effects on its continuing trade crisis with the United States as more important than the possible negative affects it might have on its relations with the Middle East. By skilfully cloaking the real purpose of the visit behind shuttle diplomacy between the Israelis and Palestinians, Tokyo ensured that any possible economic repercussions would be minimised.

The other pillar of Japan's comprehensive security policy involves the quiet diversification of foreign sources of energy and raw materials while making those sources dependent on Japanese goods, services, technology, and capital. While Tokyo has managed to reduce its dependence on Middle East oil from 75 per cent in 1979 to only 68 per cent in 1986, it has carried out a wide range of measures designed to cushion the effects of any possible future oil cut-offs or price hikes. The diversification policy includes not just the expansion of sources of oil supplies, but also oil stockpiling, the development and use of alternative energy sources, the conservation of energy—particularly by improving the efficiency of oil-dependent industries—and promoting the development of industries not heavily dependent on oil.²⁴ The government has taken the lead in developing new oil sources by funding 80 per cent of exploration costs through the Japan National Oil Corporation (JNOC). Both the EximBank and Development Bank channel additional money to exploration through loans and subsidies.

In addition, the government is a major oil buyer; by 1982 government-secured oil accounted for over 43 per cent of Japan's oil imports. Spot market purchases accounted for 16 per cent of imports in 1983. Much of the government purchases have been used for stockpiling. The Oil Stockpiling Act of 1975 required the oil industry to build up its stockpiles which in 1981 reached a hundred days, while government reserves account for an additional thirty days. Reserves of liquid natural gas stand at forty-five days. Under government guidance, industry has carried out extensive conservation measures, including a gradual shift towards cheap coal imports.

Tokyo has been highly successful in all these efforts. Today about 9

²⁴ T Akaha, 'Japan's response to threats of shipping disruptions in Southeast Asia and the Middle East', *Pacific Affairs* 59 (2) 1986, pp 258-9.

per cent of oil imports come from reserves developed by Japanese oil companies. The share of oil in the total energy supply of the nation has steadily declined from 71.1 per cent in 1979 to 59.6 per cent in 1984.²⁵ Helped in part by slower economic growth that has reduced reliance on oil imports, Japan's total oil imports have fallen dramatically since 1980, when they peaked at 6.8 million barrels a day, to about 4.2 million barrels a day since 1983.²⁶

Conclusion

Japanese diplomacy in the Middle East has been highly successful. Tokyo has skilfully juggled protection of both its vital Middle East energy sources and its alliance with the West by finessing conflicting demands with smoke and mirror diplomacy while quietly and steadily pursuing a vast diversification effort that has dramatically reduced its vulnerability to a major oil disruption. The policy shift from *seikei hunri* to comprehensive security was a shift in style not substance. Although Tokyo has championed Palestinian rights since 1973 and even hosted Arafat in 1981, its actual policy in terms of UN votes and aid differs little from that of Washington. The allies both strongly support moderate Arab states with massive aid, and vote in favour of humanitarian issues involving the region. Neither country votes in favour of any UN resolution strongly critical of Israel or favouring a change in the regional status quo: Washington uses a veto in the Security Council or no vote in the General Assembly, while Tokyo (not a permanent member of the Security Council), abstains in the General Assembly. Japan differs only in not directly supporting Israel.

When faced with a choice between straining its alliance with Washington or maintaining its economic interests, Tokyo has consistently chosen the latter. The most blatant examples were secretly buying Iranian oil in 1953 after Mossadegh's nationalisation, and frantically buying Iranian spot market oil in 1979 during the hostage crisis. Although Japanese policy-makers have described their diplomacy as 'value free' (*issai no kachi handan o shinai gaiko*), in reality it is clearly based on Japanese economic interests.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 259

²⁶ D B Bobrow and R T Kudrle, 'How middle powers can manage resource weakness: Japan and energy', *World Politics* 39 (4) 1987, p. 536. It should be noted, however, that in 1987 the total Japanese energy demand increased by 5 per cent, an increase greater than at any time in the last decade and, for the first time in four years, greater than the growth in GNP. This increase in Japanese energy imports reflected the strength of the yen.

Since its economic interests in the Middle East began developing in the 1950s, the 1973 oil embargo was the only real crisis Tokyo has faced in the region. Tokyo overcame the crisis with skilful diplomacy and massive economic restructuring. Japanese actions during the hostage crisis were far less praiseworthy. Massive spot market buying created a shortage that had not previously existed and contributed to the doubling of oil prices that year. Other diplomatic efforts such as its attempts to mediate in the Iran-Iraq War have been successful in promoting Japan's image as a peacemaker, although the fighting and attacks on Gulf shipping continues. While over 60 per cent of Japan's oil still comes from the Persian Gulf compared with only 7 per cent of the USA's, Tokyo's oil lifeline is protected by US and West European warships: Article IX in effect allows Japan to enjoy the benefits of alliance with the West and membership of the world economy, while paying minimal costs.

It must be mentioned, however, that in response to the decline in US power, pressure has been mounting on Japan to contribute to the security interests of the Western Alliance. The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea (1978), the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979), and the Iran-Iraq war have all led to increased US demands on Japan to increase its defence budget and thus help combat the US nightmare of communist expansion in the Pacific region. However, the pressure on Japan to play a greater military role in the Gulf has declined with the August 1988 truce between Iran and Iraq, the subsequent peace talks and the slow reduction in the Western naval presence there.

Japanese economic interests in the Middle East will undoubtedly remain secure for the foreseeable future. The strong yen and the continued world oil glut have made any oil imports cheap and relatively secure. The slow steps toward a peace settlement between Iran and Iraq will enable both to increase their oil exports, thus boosting the world glut and lowering prices further. These developments all strengthen Japan's policy of quietly supporting US policy during periods of relative calm while breaking with Washington and following the EC lead during crises. Now that it has replaced the United States as world banker with the world's ten largest banks, Tokyo can increasingly use its massive financial power to smooth over diplomatic crises, while continuing to rely on Washington to flex its military muscles if things get out of hand. Japan's policy in the Middle East will undoubtedly remain the same.

Dilemmas of agrarian communism: peasant differentiation, sectoral and village politics

The centrality of peasant rebellion to communist revolution in the twentieth century,¹ has obscured the tension between class-differentiated peasant interests and communist programmes. The central communist dilemma in democratic India is well understood—insurrection vs parliamentarianism.² Having accepted the parliamentary path, agrarian communism faces the profound dilemma of finding strategies to cope with capitalist agriculture.

Resolution of the land question has a strategic and tactical component. Since Lenin, leftist agrarian theory has explicitly recognised a contradiction between the tactical imperative of promising land to the underclasses and the strategic threat that successful land reform will conservatise precisely those classes which form the tactical roots of mobilisation.³ In landlord-tenant systems that are important in areas of greatest communist electoral success in India (Kerala and West Bengal), both the classic dilemma of conservatising the tenantry and the position of numerically dominant agricultural labourers in agrarian policy confound the left. The labourers are the truly 'awkward class'.

The logic of embourgeoisement is not restricted to a leftist project: it is intermittently promoted by the right. Samuel Huntington summarised a distinguished lineage of social scientific lore underpinning conservative use of land reform by domestic elites in crisis and international elites concerned with 'containing communism': 'No social group is more conservative than a land-owning peasantry, and none is more revolutionary than a peasantry which owns too little land or pays too high a

¹ E Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

² B Gupta, *Communism in Indian Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972; TV Sathyamurthy, *India Since Independence: studies in the development of the power of the state*, Volume I, *Centre-State Relations: the case of Kerala*, Delhi: Ajanta, 1985.

³ R Herring, *Land to the Tiller: the political economy of agrarian reform in South Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, chapters 3 and 6.

rental'.⁴ This Janus-faced character of the peasantry is widely recognised in social theory and realpolitik. Conservatising land reform is explicitly promoted by that strand of US foreign policy which seeks to apply lessons from the 'loss of China' to eradicate the 'breeding grounds' of communism in poor societies from Vietnam to El Salvador.⁵

Land reform thus presents the agrarian left with a double-edged sword: an issue that mobilises the poor but simultaneously threatens to destroy the very social-structural niche which effectuates that mobilisational potential. Agrarian communism in India has diverged along these lines of analysis and opportunity. Kerala's communists recognised the threat of embourgeoisement but pressed for two decades to abolish the landlord-tenant nexus with a land-to-the-tiller reform.⁶ That the party has been able periodically to win elections (1980, 1987) in coalition after loss of a section of its agrarian base says more about the opposition in Kerala than about resolution of agrarian dilemmas.

Electoral communism in West Bengal averted the conservatising threat of embourgeoisement. Rejecting land-to-the-tiller, Bengal's party settled for the land policy of conservative regimes: tenancy reform.⁷ The crucial difference politically is that tenants remain dependent on political-administrative means to retain proprietary claims. The *bargadar* of Bengal remains secure in the possession of land and payment of below-market rents only so long as the state sides with tenants rather than landlords. Decentralisation of authority to *panchayats* (village councils) locates sharecroppers' interests in continuation of the party's control at both state and local levels.

This is not the place to speculate on causes of the Kerala-Bengal divergence. However, agrarian radicalism in Kerala began earlier than in Bengal; tenant grievances figured prominently in the Mappilla 'outrages' of the nineteenth century.⁸ Landlordism as a social system of oppression imposed more severe indignities on subordinate classes in Kerala and thus provoked a more comprehensive revolutionary programme.⁹ Ruined tenants who were structurally akin to middle

⁴ S Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 375.

⁵ R Prosterman and J Riedinger, *Land Reform and Democratic Development*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, chapters 5 and 6; A McCoy, 'Land Reform as Counter-Revolution: US foreign policy and the tenant', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 3(1) 1971.

⁶ R Herring, *Land to the Tiller*, chapters 6 and 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, chapter 2.

⁸ W Logan, *A Malabar Manual*, Trivandrum: Charithram, 1887/1981, pp 641-97.

⁹ R Herring, 'Scaling Congress Thunder: the rise to power of a communist movement in South India,' in P Merk! and K Lawson (eds), *When Parties Fail*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

peasants, rather than urban intellectuals, were more likely to be local leaders of the mass organisations before Independence. Communists in Kerala did not face the mass repression which occurred in West Bengal in the early 1970s; the party was manipulated, undermined and dismissed by Delhi,¹⁰ but not slaughtered wholesale. The Bengali party can somewhat legitimately claim that retention of office (not power) necessitated compromises which were unnecessary in Kerala. No matter how badly *bargadars* fare in comparison with Kerala's *kudiyuans*, they fare better with the left in power than under Congress control of the police and bureaucracy. The Bengali communist strategy thus weights heavily retention of office for the objective of creating political space within which organisations and individuals of the agrarian underclass can operate with more freedom; agrarian policy channels underclass interests toward their electoral programme.

Politically, the West Bengal strategy escapes embourgeoisement and reproduces dependency (more on the party than on landlords, though the latter remains in evidence).¹¹ It remains unclear how redistributive Operation Barga (registration of share tenants and *de jure* reduction of rents) has been. Virtually all the classic problems of regulation of tenancy¹² have appeared to various degrees: intimidation and failure to register tenancies, continuation of illegally high rents, dependence on landlords for consumption loans, and exclusion of the labourers.¹³ Ashok Rudra concluded: 'if anything, the *Bargadars* have suffered a setback in terms of their income.'¹⁴ Consistent with the political dependency interpretation is the fact that the CPI(M) (Communist Party of India—Marxist) has enhanced its rural position electorally while losing urban support.

Land reforms in Kerala redistributed income dramatically to tenants, but simultaneously accentuated contradictions within the agrarian left.

¹⁰ T Sathiyamurthy, *India Since Independence*, Volume 1.

¹¹ Compare with A Rudra, 'One step forward, two steps backwards', *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay) SVI:25/26, June 1981, pp A61–A68.

¹² R Herring, *Land to the Tiller*, chapters 2 and 3.

¹³ Interviews with Commissioner, Land Reforms, D Bandyopadhyaya and Joint Secretary, L M Ray, Calcutta, June 1980. Less critical assessments are found in T K Ghosh, *Operation Barga and Land Reforms*, Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1986, and A Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, chapter 3. More critical evaluations, based on extensive field work, are A Rudra, 'One step forward, two steps backwards', A Basu, 'Dilemmas of radical reform: parliamentary communism: West Bengal', Amherst, Massachusetts: Amherst College, 1986; S Bandyopadhyaya and D Von Eschen, 'The impact of politics on rural production and distribution', Association for Asian Studies, Annual Meetings, San Francisco, 1988, Bandyopadhyaya *et al*, *Evaluation of Land Reform Measures in West Bengal*, Bangkok ILO/ARTEP, 1985.

¹⁴ A Rudra, 'One step forward, two steps backwards', p A65.

Market logic holds that agriculture is a business; wages paid must at the margin yield something more than revenue product, whatever the consequences for the subsistence of labourers. I call this secondary dilemma Marshallian because it pits the moral economy of newly landed farmers adopting market capitalism directly against the subsistence claims of labourers. The response of communists in Kerala has been twofold: first, to create structures of local corporatism to prevent this contradiction from leading to unmanageable class warfare, and secondly to displace the conflict into the distributive and federal arenas. The first response subordinated trade unionism to tactical politics. The second has attempted to deflect the contradiction to redefining federalism in favour of the states where distribution takes precedence over accumulation. Populism – in the sense of generalised distribution to an undifferentiated outgroup to maintain legitimacy—has joined strands of social democratic mobilisation which replaced Leninism as dominant communist tactics in India. Exploitation comes to be analysed in sectoral or regional terms, in contrast to the class-focused moral outrage of the historical movement organised around 'death to landlordism'. One strand of populism constitutes a third dilemma of agrarian communism: sectoral politics.

Rigging the terms of trade in favour of agriculture could blunt the class contradiction between agrarian capital and labour. Capital has no problem with a high-wage/high-profit system, and should be pleased with the aggregate impact on realisation of profits through the effect on aggregate demand. In theory, higher prices should stimulate more investment, growth and surplus. The model is social democracy: a marriage of regulated capitalism for producers and welfarism for consumers. The critical departure from the European model is the size of the sector that needs to be subsidised. Sri Lanka's experience with wholesale subsidies demonstrates that progress in alleviating malnutrition is possible but difficult to sustain, particularly in the absence of the means to increase the rate of accumulation.¹⁵ This constitutes a fourth dilemma for electoral communism: if the bourgeoisie is to be hobbled in its historic mission, how does the party utilise the state for accumulation?

Land reforms and class structure in Kerala

The agrarian crisis of Kerala has been and remains more severe than

¹⁵ R Herring, 'Economic Liberalization Policies in Sri Lanka: international pressures and constraints', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(8) 1987.

that of India generally, and by ecological measurement approaches Bangladesh. Population density is three times the Indian average; levels of landlessness, tenancy and underemployment have historically been the highest in India.¹⁶ Because of these structural-ecological conditions, mass movements associated with the left have been well developed by subcontinental standards.¹⁷ Kerala elected the first state-level communist government (in 1957). Partly because of the strength and duration of leftist mobilisation and the resulting budgetary priorities, Kerala's developmental record on basic human needs is anomalous; despite a per capita income below the national mean, Kerala exhibits the best record in India for infant mortality rate, life expectancy, and literacy.¹⁸

Kerala's success in implementing fairly radical reforms in comparative terms is widely acknowledged.¹⁹ Palghat district is of particular interest because the agrarian system was affected by land reforms to an extent matched by few other districts. Two village samples are discussed in this article—Nallepilli in Chittur Taluk and Kavesseri II (Padoor) in Alathur Taluk—though Nallepilli is highlighted because Chittur is the base of the most contentious farmers' organisation, the Deshiya Karshaka Samajam (DKS), which has been instrumental in promoting legal battles, political opposition, and physical violence directed against the legislation being discussed. The decade 1970–80, during which agrarian reforms were completed, is the major focus of this analysis. References to the sample mean formal interviews from a randomly-selected sample of 105 households in the Nallepilli *panchayat*.²⁰ The text also draws on extensive unstructured interviews with local labour and peasant leaders, government officers, politicians, and a cross-section of the unsampled village population. The 'farmer's sample' is a separate sample of one hundred farmers from Chittur, Alathur, and Palghat Taluks, selected on the basis of their local reputation as respected agriculturalists.

¹⁶ H Hart and R Herring, 'Political conditions of Land Reform: Kerala and Maharashtra', in R F Frykenberg (ed), *Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia*, Delhi: Orient Longman, 1977

¹⁷ R Herring, 'Stealing Congress Thunder'

¹⁸ M Morris and M McAlpin, *Measuring the Condition of India's Poor*, New Delhi: Promilla, 1982; Kerala, State Planning Board, *Economic Review*, Trivandrum, 1986, Appendix 10 8; A R Rouyer, 'Political Capacity and the Decline of Fertility in India', *American Political Science Review* 81(2) 1987, p 459.

¹⁹ For example, R Prosterman and J Riedinger, *Land Reform and Democratic Development*, p 114

²⁰ From a randomly chosen ward in each *panchayat*, house numbers from the census tract were used to select every fourth household, beginning with a number selected by two coin tosses. Randomisation produced few difficulties in locating households, but raised doubts of villagers as to why I took more interest in some households than others in a seemingly inexplicable pattern. Selection criteria for villages are too complex to report here.

Dynamics of the Nallepilli site in particular raise broader issues in the debate *within* the equity-with-growth developmental paradigm between extensive redistribution of assets and various forms of 'regulated capitalism'.²¹ The asset-redistributive argument is that 'trickle-down' mechanisms work poorly if at all, and leak public resources badly. The oppositional argument is that asset redistribution is politically impracticable and economically disruptive; the poor can benefit from a regulated capitalism which retains its dynamism but sheds its cruelty. Kerala is preeminent in implementing both strategies. Land reforms profoundly altered the asset structure, abolishing ground rent and landlordism, and vesting lands in the tenants. But tenants were not the weakest agrarian class: responses to the much larger class of agricultural labourers have been through regulation of capitalism, granting their long-standing claims to greater security on the land, freedom from arbitrary abuse by landed superiors, and a larger share of the surplus from the land—claims structurally isomorphic to those of the tenantry. The evidence from Nallepilli demonstrates concretely the dilemmas of regulated capitalism: a stalemated class conflict which permits, perhaps aggravates, immiserisation of the labourers.

Abolition of landlordism transferred more than 40 per cent of the operated area to tenants; land above the lowest ceiling in the region was appropriated for redistribution. House and garden sites have been transferred extensively to labourers. The agrarian class structure, historically one of the most complex in India, has been substantially simplified, despite persistent and legitimate critiques that the reforms did little for the most depressed class, the agricultural labourers, whose position has deteriorated.²² The agrarian structure of Nallepilli conformed to the formal-legal structure mandated on 1 January 1970, a finding quite at variance with village studies in most of South Asia. There were no rentiers and essentially no tenants. Experientially, the

²¹ Compare with V Dandekar and N Rath, *Poverty in India*, Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1971; Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), *Alternatives in Agricultural Development*, New Delhi, Fifteen Volumes, 1980; P C Joshi, 'Perspectives on Agrarian Reconstruction. India in the Asian context,' *Mainstream* 16 (21–22) (Republic Day) 1978; R Herring, 'Economic Consequences of Local Power Configuration in South Asia', in Desai, Rudolph and Rudra (eds), *Agrarian Power and Agricultural Productivity in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984.

²² Compare with J P Mencher, 'Agrarian relations in two rice regions of Kerala,' *Economic and Political Weekly* 14 (9) 1978; J P Mencher, 'The Lessons and Non-Lessons of Kerala: agricultural labourers and poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly* 15 (41–3) 1980; N Krishnaji, 'Agrarian Relations and the Left Movement in Kerala', *Economic and Political Weekly* 13 (6–7) 1979; R J Herring, 'Abolition of Landlordism in Kerala: a redistribution of privilege', *Economic and Political Weekly* 15 (26) 1980; K Kannan, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, chapter 6

class structure was bimodal: everyone was identified as landowner (*krishikaran*) or labourer (*koolikaran*).

Though the rentiers as a class have been eliminated, critiques speak of new landlords²³—the former tenants; at a theoretical level the dominant communist party distinguishes between feudal and capitalist landlords.²⁴ But the term landlord is a conceptual distortion. The real lords of the land—the *jenmies*—are no longer in control; many live in genteel poverty on decaying estates. New owners, however large their holdings, are not lords of the land; power *vis-à-vis* the labourers is the power of capital, not of dyadic authority and servitude. Though *krishikars* are not landlords, most retain the traditional disdain for manual labour characteristic of landlordism. Though 'peasants' in CPI(M) theory, most landowners in the sample did not work on their farms. Those who claimed to work admitted that participation was typically limited to supervision of labourers. A more telling account may be taken from the responses of the permanent labourers—those attached by law to a single patch of land, who must be employed whenever agricultural operations are done on that land and who thus always work for the same owner. In about 94 per cent of their responses, the landowners were reported as doing nothing other than supervision (often quite perfunctory); the modal formulation was that 'they are only standing on the *bund*' (embankment, *varambu*).

Agrarian reform altered the property structure, but relations in production were little changed. About 89 per cent of the permanent labourers said that landholders did only supervision before the reforms; after the reforms, 94 per cent. Though small, the entire change was accounted for by former tenants. For some tenants, new rights created the opportunity to raise their status by ceasing to labour in the muck of paddy fields. The owner who stands on the *bund*, typically shaded by an umbrella, is spatially and symbolically removed from the filth and nakedness which universally signify the inferiority of manual labour. Former tenants are derisively called '1-1-70s' (after the effective date of the reforms) or *mashuris* (after the local HYV [High Yielding Variety] paddy which enhanced their prosperity). Though newly-landed former tenants were somewhat more likely than longer-established owners to invest in the land, as per received theory,²⁵ the modal perception of labourers about what tenants did with the surplus was: 'they ate it.'

²³ For example, see J Mencher, 'Agrarian Relations in Two Rice Regions of Kerala'

²⁴ Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M), *Central Committee Resolution on Certain Agrarian Issues and An Explanatory Note* by P Sundarayya (Calcutta), 1973.

²⁵ R Herring, *Land to the Tiller*, chapter 9.

Former tenant households were easy to spot on the ground, typically by the half-finished or new tile roofs of their homes or other signs of conspicuous consumption typical of a new rich stratum. More than two-thirds of landholders in the sample were former tenants, averaging 5.5 acres of wet land (paddy fields) per beneficiary, and 2.2 acres of dry land. Though small holders by international standards, tenant beneficiaries are distinctly privileged in a state in which almost 90 per cent of all holdings are less than 2.5 acres.²⁶

Only 12 per cent of the labourers received land, and in such small plots—averaging 0.88 acres wet and 0.63 acres dry—that their class status remained the same, objectively and subjectively. Labourers were bitter (*vishumam*) about this result. Of those who did not receive land, about 95 per cent said they had not benefited in any way from the reforms, despite decades of support for the communist agrarian movement. In the long and costly mobilisation to overthrow landlordism, labourers were explicitly promised that the social surplus would be shared. The party's rallying cry, along with 'death to landlordism', was then 'agriculturalists and labourers are one'. Tenants were not eager to share their gains, pleading poverty. Land reforms thus set in motion new class conflicts, objectively dividing the left movement on the issue of who benefits from the appropriation of the rentiers' traditional share of the social surplus. Eric Wolf's 'rent fund'.²⁷ Left unity was threatened both by economic conflicts over disposition of the rent fund and the political effects of embourgeoisement.

Embourgeoisement from the perspective of the local party

The first agitation in Palghat on separate goals of labourers was in 1953, when the communist peasant association (Kerala Karshaka Sanghom, or KKS) adopted the cause of female workers who were denied the right to cover their breasts.²⁸ Reflecting decades of agitation, the 1953 Amendment to the Malabar Tenancy Act had conceded many tenant demands. Fearing their desertion, the party launched the Malabar Karshaka Thozhilali (Agricultural Workers) Union. Mobilisation of labourers and peasants proceeded in unison until the unions began independent actions in 1970–71. Unions had been strengthened during

²⁶ Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Report on the Agricultural Census 1980–81*. Trivandrum, 1988, p. 13.

²⁷ E. R. Wolf, *Peasants*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966.

²⁸ P. Nayar, 'Agrarian Movements in Rural Development: a case study', typescript, Kariavattom University of Kerala, 1979, p. 43.

the communist-led ministry (1967–69) and by subsequent agitations to implement land reforms. Wage militancy was increased by consciousness that tenants were no longer paying rent (typically more than half the gross produce) and had surplus to share. Militancy was enhanced as well because the demise of landlordism demonstrated concretely that the awesome power of the *jenmis*, to whom tenants had paid such abject obeisance, could be destroyed by political struggles and public policy; the power of the 'new *jenmis*' did not seem awesome in comparison.

The December Resolution of the combined peasant and labourer associations in 1970 sanctioned mass implementation of the land reforms without regard for 'legal niceties'. Labourers fenced compounds and harvested the produce; 'surplus' land (believed to be in excess of the ceiling) was occupied. By 1972–73 labour militancy had developed beyond the expectation, and control, of the party. Disruptions in production from violent wage struggles, mass meetings and demonstrations seriously alienated farmers. The local party sympathised with the militancy of the labourers in recognition of their contributions; nevertheless, after the harvest strike of 1973, the district party called a meeting of farmer, labourer, and student organisations and decided that agrarian militancy had to be more carefully targeted and controlled to preserve unity.²⁹

Desertion of tenants from the left was driven by altered property relations and wage struggles; in the words of the CPI(M) district secretary, 'they needed a new party to protect their new interests'. Attendance at KKS meetings dwindled; the secretary noted that the absentees were the larger tenants (roughly five acres and above). The Deshiya Karshaka Samajam (DKS) simultaneously 'grew like yeast'. At the district level, all eleven assembly constituencies were won by the CPI in 1960 after dismissal of the first communist ministry when agrarian mobilisation to protect the land reform was high; by the mid-1970s less than half that number were returned. At a micro-level, a prosperous tenant of Alathur Taluk noted that the desertion by farmers (including himself) in his ward was complete. Before the 1973 harvest strike, the ward had been 100 per cent communist; the *panchayat* representative had received a medal from the party for performance. After the strike, all the farmers and about one-fourth of the labourers turned away from the party. The labourers who deserted—typically those most in

²⁹ In addition to author's interviews, these sections are based on police files on agrarian violence, memoranda from the District Collector to higher authorities and labour department circulars, as well as P Nayur, 'Agrarian Movements in Rural Development'.

need of consumption loans - joined the Congress (I) INTUC union branch; Indira Gandhi's state of emergency (1975-77) simultaneously increased the attractiveness of Congress (I) to farmers through its effect on labour discipline. Party leaders disagree on the significance and permanence of losses from embourgeoisement. Those with historical perspective and dialectical logic dismiss the rapid emergence of class militancy among landowners as expressed by the DKS; their assumption is that no other party can represent the class interests of farmers in the long run. But the DKS arose because of class conflict which directly engaged the interests of landowners; support for militancy by the labourers directly increases the attractiveness of conservative parties and organizations to farmers, precisely *because* of their class interests. The multi-class coalition based on potential expropriation of the rent fund disappeared with landlordism. Moreover, party pessimists argue that the former tenants were more important to the party than their numbers would indicate, both financially and in terms of the local influence they wielded.

Precise measurement of tenant desertion is impossible. Though something of an ecological fallacy, it is true that the party has declined in its historical stronghold of Malabar, where land reforms struck deep and has partially compensated where land reforms were less important. Former tenants were reluctant to discuss their own politics, but acknowledged that desertion was common. Many countered that the party had first deserted them—by becoming 'the party of the labourers' or 'anti-farmer'. Some sense of local perceptions of shifts in loyalty among former tenants can be gained from a survey conducted by the author in 1980 after the Assembly elections which brought the communists back into government as leaders of the Left Democratic Front.

As Table 1 illustrates, at least a plurality in all cases supported the embourgeoisement interpretation, labourers more strongly than farmers. Even more strongly, the labourers affirmed in a separate question that the historical unity of labourers and landholders had been destroyed after land reforms. Farmers generally had a less opportunistic interpretation of political allegiance. Some stressed decline in the quality of local communist leadership (which is real).³⁰ Others mentioned the loss of monopoly by the CP(M); whereas the KKS was previously the only active peasant association, now most parties have both farmer and labourer organisations. Explanations centred on local caste considerations were conspicuous by their relative infrequency.

³⁰ See R Herring, 'Stealing Congress Thunder', pp 413-15.

Table 1

Political Effects of Embourgeoisement

'Has the desertion of tenants after land reforms reduced the CPI(M) vote?'

	(Percentages)				
	Nallepilli		Padoor		Farmer Sample
	Labourers	Farmers	Labourers	Farmers	Farmers
Yes	61	47	85	66	52
No	3	42	4	22	24
Don't Know	36	11	11	11	24
Cumulative N = 307					

Resolution of emerging conflicts around the bitterness and militancy of labour took the form of new public policy, most importantly the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act (KAWA) of 1974, bitterly referred to by leaders of the militant DKs as 'the factory acts'. The central provision was permanency of employment for attached labourers; there was also a Provident Fund for labour, to which farmers had to contribute, permanent conciliation machinery at the district level, greatly reduced hours of work, scheduled breaks for rest, tea and lunch, an employment register to be kept on the farm, and revision of the minimum wage. Its provisions now structure the conflict between land and labour.

Wages vs profits: the 'Factory Acts'

Jeffrey Paige, following Stinchcombe,³¹ argues that agrarian systems of the landlord-tenant type necessarily produce patterns of conflict quite different from those of family-farm systems. Conflict in a landlord-tenant system may assume revolutionary forms—attacks on property institutions and class structure and its associated political expression of authority and power. To the extent that one considers electoral communism revolutionary, these predictions are borne out by the association of the communist vote with high extents of tenancy and landlessness in India and within Kerala.³² Family-farm systems are

³¹ J Paige, *Agrarian Revolution, social movements and export agriculture in the underdeveloped world*, New York: Free Press, 1975; A Stinchcombe, 'Agricultural Enterprise and Rural Class Relations', *American Journal of Sociology*, 67 (September), 1961.

³² D S Zagoria, 'The ecology of peasant communism in India', *American Political Science Review* 65, 1971, pp 144-60; K G Krishna Murthy and G Rao, *Political Preferences in Kerala*, New Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan, 1968.

Table 2
*Comparative Wages and Yields: Palghat, Adjacent Districts and Kerala State*³⁰

Year	Paddy Yields (kg/hectare—Virippu season)			
	Palghat	Malappuram	Trichur	Kerala State
1975	3095	2115	1761	2242
1976-77	2617	1516	1479	2038
1977-78	3435	1939	1526	2300
1978-79	3085	2103	1903	1388
1980-81	3232	1898	1855	2413
1981-82	3440	1820	1719	2442
1982-83	3560	1687	1966	2571
1983-84	3040	1726	2144	2417
1984-85	3455	1945	1823	2623

Year	Wages (Rs/day): Paddy Labourers							
	Palghat		Malappuram		Trichur		Kerala State	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1960-61	1.45	NA	—	—	1.97	—	1.85	—
1970-71	4.05	NA	—	—	5.61	—	5.09	—
1976-77	6.18	5.09	8.63	6.19	8.50	5.38	8.44	5.89
1977-78	6.35	5.35	9.75	6.65	8.50	5.38	8.67	6.06
1978-79	6.75	5.75	10.00	6.81	8.88	5.80	8.99	6.26
1979-80	7.15	5.77	10.00	7.17	10.09	6.96	9.58	6.68
1980-81	—	—	—	—	—	—	11.13	7.91
1981-82	9.08	6.89	13.31	8.71	14.40	9.27	12.74	8.83
1982-83	9.79	8.00	14.13	9.33	14.75	10.42	13.29	9.55
1983-84	12.46	9.08	15.16	11.46	17.04	11.79	15.86	11.02
1984-85	—	—	—	—	—	—	23.60	11.89
1985-86	—	—	—	—	—	—	26.08	15.10

M = male, *F* = female.

2). Paddy prices are quite volatile; the big jump in wages (1973-75) coincided with escalating paddy prices and the temporary windfall of land reforms—tenants ceased paying rent but had not yet begun paying compensation. For a brief time, the promise of the communist movement was fulfilled—the rent fund was divided between tenants and labourers, but at great cost to left unity because of the extreme militancy whereby labourers won higher wages.

³⁰ Source: Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Statistics for Planning*, Trivandrum, 1986, Table II, 25; *Statistics for Planning*, 1980, Tables 9.6, 4.11; Kerala, *Report on Wage Structure Survey*, Trivandrum, 1987.

A second strain in the lament is less familiar in the classical commodity reform movement: farmers complain that they are losing control of the labour process with a consequent decline in the *quality* of labour power which they purchase at higher unit prices. Farmers and labourers largely agreed that fundamental changes have occurred in the farmers' ability to extract quality labour power in a timely fashion. That there was a time when class and production relations were fundamentally different is understood by everyone, though social change proceeded unevenly, village by village, often field by field. Labourers mark two signposts: first, when 'flag-holding' became common (around the time of the first communist ministry); secondly, 'when tenants got the land' or when 'the rules were made' (1970-75).

Landowners' views of the past are consistent with a romanticised version of the academic patron-client model: relations with labour were distinctly personal and reciprocal, with diffuse obligations on both ends. Labourers were attached to a single landowner, on call for whatever work was demanded. Owners took a paternalistic interest in their labourers' welfare: for example, in the provision for illness; gifts on special occasions; intervention with police or enemies; emergency interest-free subsistence loans; income security for the aged. Labourers had different views of the terms of exchange. All agreed that small subsistence loans were made to attached labourers, and were sometimes forgiven; a majority received gifts. Other elements of diffuse obligation of patrons were contradicted. About nine out of ten labourers said no provisions for illness were made. My question concerning the old age insurance met bitter incredulity. Labourers were enthusiastic about the pension proclaimed by the Left Democratic Front in 1980, though the payments were minimal; Rs45 (US\$5.63) per month (revised to Rs60 in 1987) far exceeded the most generous treatment in the traditional system, and approached the average income of those still labouring in the fields.

In describing their prior condition, a number of labourers claimed to have been slaves. *Adima* has the same ambiguity as the English word slave; both are used as metaphors which dilute but resonate with the original meaning (as in English 'a slave to her husband', or 'wage slave'). One labourer noted that there had been no real slaves for decades, but *adima* was still appropriate—'we were born to work in the fields, and required to do so; even if there was a calamity in our house and the landlord called, we had to go.'

A great deal of the pre-reform moral economy is disputed along class

lines.³⁷ Landowners did not let healthy workers starve; gifts and loans constituting a significant consumption supplement were common. The materialist explanation offered by both owners and labourers was that without the supplements, the workers 'could not have survived'. Such supplements are an ideal factor payment system for land *vis-à-vis* labour: being discretionary, they can reward loyal and diligent workers and punish the recalcitrant; appearing to be voluntary, they reinforce paternalism as ideology. But dependency and fear emerge more strongly in labourers' accounts than paternalism and reciprocity. Commonly mentioned were fear of being denied employment, fear of eviction, beatings, house burnings, rape. One of the most important changes in production relations is that 'the fear is gone'. What is not disputed across classes is that the traditional labour-control system produced extraordinary discipline and flexibility in the utilisation of labour.

Landowner strategies and dilemmas for labour

Agriculture is an enterprise in which production is especially sensitive to completion of certain operations within a critical time period; this is especially true of hydraulic paddy systems employing biologically advanced varieties. Delays in transplanting or harvesting significantly threaten yields. Irrigation operations frequently require pressing and continuous attention following excessive rains; crops may be damaged if channels are not cleared, drainage maintained, *bund* breaches quickly repaired. Before the KAWA, labourers had been on call twenty-four hours a day, and would often work through the night to control water or complete the harvest, using lanterns and torches.

The KAWA specifies a maximum work day of six to eight hours in contrast to the twelve hour days common a decade earlier. Farmers complain that they are paying more for a day's labour that consists of fewer hours while each hour of labour is of lower intensity and quality. Local job actions, district-level Industrial Relations Committee rulings, and court decisions, within the framework of the KAWA, have effectively deprived landowners of the power to make unilateral decisions about

³⁷ Despite some analytical confusion, the term 'moral economy' should connote opposition to *amoral*, not *immoral*. The core notion is that economic outcomes in pre-market society are evaluated by norms embedded in social relations generally; market-driven outcomes are in normative terms irrelevant, often inexplicable and unacceptable. The major theoretical statement is J Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976; the briefest possible summary is R Herring, review of Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*, *American Political Science Review* 74 (2) June 1980.

which specific labourers, and how many of them, are to be deployed per acre of land, over what time period, and for what operation.³⁸ Conflicts over attempts to reassert that traditional power have produced strikes and lockouts. Farmers can no longer use threats of unemployment to discipline permanent workers, or replace those who are weakening, old, or recalcitrant.

To contravene these effects, various tactics are tried. Some farmers attempt to import Tamil workers from Coimbatore, but there are logistical and legal constraints (for example, a High Court ruling in 1973), and local unions resist. A more radical response has been to resign from paddy cultivation altogether, either by selling out or by changing to less labour-intensive crops. Though significant changes in cropping patterns are occurring, typically to coconuts and sugar cane, there are agronomic constraints and risks; the Land Utilisation Act requires government approval to convert paddy fields (because of the chronic rice deficit). At the aggregate level, paddy acreage and production are declining significantly, contrary to the national trend, further reducing employment opportunities; gross area under paddy declined from 8.85 lakh acres in 1975–76 to 6.64 lakh acres in 1986–87 (*lakh* = 100,000).³⁹

Some farmers try to substitute family labour for hired labour; here the 'new landlords' are in a superior position, as their experience and caste status more easily permit going into the fields.⁴⁰ This may be Chayanov's revenge, advantaging peasant-caste farmers with large families *vis-à-vis* their capitalist farmer neighbours, but the unions resist strenuously, especially at harvest. Farmers have been physically prevented from harvesting on their own lands, even when the resultant delays damage crops. Mechanisation has significantly reduced labour costs, but there are limits. In the flush of high prices in 1974–75 and the extra income from abolition of rental payments, and spurred by wage increases, former tenants in particular purchased tractors. The tractor population of the district increased by almost 200 per cent between 1972 and 1977. But with continuing inflation and depressed paddy prices, new tractors became uneconomic by the late 1970s. Tractor rental costs escalated from Rs25 per hour in 1973 to Rs60 in 1980. There have also been

³⁸ Kerala, *Report of the Committee Appointed by Government to Hold Enquiries and Advise Government in Respect of Fixation of Minimum Wages for Employment in Agricultural Operations in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1977, Kerala, Labour Department, *Report of the Sub-committee Under the Palghat Agricultural Area*, No 1382/77/LD, Palghat, 1977.

³⁹ Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Statistics for Planning*, Trivandrum, 1986, Table 11.7; Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Report on the Survey of Unemployment in Kerala 1987*, Trivandrum, 1988, p 7.

⁴⁰ Compare with J Mencher, 'Agrarian relations in two rice regions of Kerala'.

instances of labourers' burning tractors, though Luddite impulses have been quelled by police intervention and are contrary to union policy.

Farmers have resisted permanency both through legal channels and on the ground—refusing to register labourers, attempting to replace striking permanent labourers, importing extra labourers to finish operations more quickly and selling or partitioning land. Labourers have responded through their unions and the Labour Department and this has led to some violent confrontations. The power of labour is such that a *proprietary* claim of the permanent labourers is now widely recognised in practice; upon sale or partition of land, owners are frequently forced to pay permanent labourers a solatium or percentage of the sales receipts (about one week's wages per year of service, depending on the bargaining power of the parties and value of the land). Farmers have reported increasing difficulty in selling land. The real price of local land declined slightly between 1970 and 1980, despite rising yields; farmers are convinced that labour troubles and the factory acts depressed land values.

Labour militancy and legal responses alienated farmers from the left, but the welfare of the labourers remains precarious. Because of seasonality of demand, their central problem is to obtain sufficient days of work per season to generate income adequate to tide the family over 'the hunger months' when there is little work in the fields. Since available work is limited by agro-ecological and technical constraints in conjunction with the size of the local work force, labourers try to raise the wage to a level sufficient to provide a subsistence income given average expected days of employment. There is a contradiction between these two imperatives; raising the wage rate induces farmers to hire less labour, assuming productivity cannot be proportionately increased.

This dilemma for labour was severe in Nallepilli. The average annual number of days of employment reported was just under ninety-nine, a figure which most labourers felt represented less than half the number necessary for adequate subsistence. The mean annual days of employment for permanent labourers was only marginally higher than that of non-permanent labourers. Almost three-quarters reported a decline in standard of living between 1970 and 1980, one-fifth an increase, and the remainder no change. Non-permanent labourers were slightly more likely to report a decline.

The primary reason for a declining standard of living is an interaction between fewer days of employment and a rate of inflation which far outstripped wage increases between 1970 and 1980 and barely caught

up thereafter (see Table 3). Despite the empirical difficulties of ascertaining annual income, there is good reason to believe the account of immiserisation. Almost 91 per cent of the labourers reported declining employment. Other studies in the area corroborate the general report of immiserisation of field workers.⁴¹ For Kerala as a whole, the work participation rate declined from 1980/81 to 1986/87; rural unemployment now is 24.7 per cent, underemployment 14.6 per cent.⁴² Available days of employment for agricultural labourers declined by 26 per cent for males and 30 per cent for females between 1963/64 and 1983/84.⁴³

Almost half the labourers attributed declining employment to mechanisation: tractors and *kubotas* (power tillers, the Japanese brand name having become the Malayalam generic). Mechanisation especially affects high-wage employment for men in ploughing, but also reduces female employment in a variety of ways. These dynamics are especially pronounced because holdings are larger than the state mean; Palghat district has almost half the tractor population of Kerala. The second most frequently mentioned cause of declining employment was the wage increase: labourers felt that farmers were giving less work whenever possible to cut their wage bills, for example, by decreasing the number of weedings from three times a season to one. Included in miscellaneous reasons for declining employment were land partitions, changes in cropping patterns, increased fallow, permanency, population growth, and union activities. There was a clear perception that landowners were taking vindictive and punitive actions to retaliate for labour militancy. Though some labourers did not suffer from the general decline in living standards for idiosyncratic reasons (improvements in earner-dependent ratios, and so on), the general dilemma for labour was clear: the higher nominal wage rate, which itself barely met subsistence needs, was perceived by farmers to be in excess of the level necessary to maintain or increase traditional labour inputs per acre, given the farmers' perception of what constitutes an acceptable profit.

Labourers were not very sympathetic to the farmers' lament. Most believed that tenants got the land gratis, 'ate' the surplus (or drank it—quasi-pun being that the *kudiyans* [tenants] have become *kudiyans*

J P Mencher, 'The lessons and non-lessons of Kerala: agricultural labourers and poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15 (41-3) 1980; P G K Panikar, 'Employment, income and food intake among agricultural labour households', *EPW* 14(34) 25 August 1979; K P Kannan, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, chapter 6.

⁴¹ Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Report on the Survey of Unemployment in Kerala 1987*, Table 2.5.

⁴² Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Statistics for Planning*, 1986, xii.5.

Table 3
*Consumer and Paddy Prices, Parity Index and Paddy Field Wages, Palghat District*⁴⁴

	Paddy Prices (Rs/para)	Parity Index	CPI**	Wages (Male) (Rs/day)
1970-71	6.80	101*	100	4.05
1971-72	7.01	NA	NA	4.58
1972-73	8.22	NA	NA	4.88
1973-74	13.06	NA	NA	7.37
1974-75	16.42	109	NA	8.39
1975-76	11.99	95	170	6.94
1976-77	9.83	99	163	6.18
1977-78	9.12	102	164	6.35
1978-79	8.78	102	187	6.75
1979-80	9.32	96	213	7.15
1980-81	10.59	93	232	8.08
1981-82	12.43	87	248	9.08
1982-83	15.75	83	255	9.79
1983-84	19.43	103	294	12.46
1985	16.88	NA	309	NA
1986	18.00	NA	328	NA

One para = 2000 cu in or about 7.5kg

* 1952-53 = 100 (prices of output/prices paid by farmers)

** Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers

[drunkards]), and exaggerate the cost-price squeeze. They call fertiliser 'Government manure' and believe it is free or virtually so. Prices of harvested paddy are well known, but the parity index which measures all costs in relation to output prices is not (see Table 3). Their perception that farmers were much better off after land reforms proceeds from evidence of a consumption binge by former tenants in particular and comparison with their own declining welfare. That an efficient five-acre farmer earns less than a peon in government service is simply irrelevant to them.

Some labourers fear that permanency has actually diminished security of employment for casual labourers; landowners are reluctant to employ the same labourers for the three consecutive harvests necessary to claim permanency. Retiring permanent workers are replaced by casual labour.

⁴⁴ Source: Kerala, Bureau of Economics and Statistics (Trivandrum and Palghat), *Season and Crop Report of Kerala State*, 1983-84, Trivandrum, 1986; *Economic Review*, 1986.

though the union claims that permanency is in effect heritable and passes to family members. The institution of permanency itself creates a structural division in the labourers class, just as security of tenure legislation historically divided the top from bottom rungs of the tenancy. There is, however, an indirectly political benefit to the permanent labourers—freedom from fear of termination—which should increase the potential for militancy. Permanent labourers are more likely to be union members, but the unions have reached a tactical cul-de-sac in solving their problems.

Even in theory, the KAWA cannot address the most serious problems facing labour; in practice, effective enforcement remains problematic. Labour officers are spread too thinly and have too little power to enforce the law; penalties for violation are extremely rare. Unions are critical to enforcement, as officers make few independent investigations. Palghat has one of the strongest unions in Kerala (which in turn has the strongest agrarian unions in India)⁴⁵ but there are political constraints. The Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU) is organisationally linked to the CPI(M), and formulates tactics in consideration of the party's broader strategy. The CPI-M understands that its own rural support rests on a class-differentiated coalition and, more importantly, that it can rule only in coalition with parties to its right.⁴⁶ Extreme militancy in the early 1970s is understood to have alienated significant sectors of the 'peasantry'. Poorer farmers, those most likely to support the party, are precisely those whose Marshallian dilemma is most severe and most aggravated by higher wages. Locally, some wage concessions are made to smaller farmers,⁴⁷ but to the disadvantage of labourers on those farms. Partisan politics also enters because higher levels of the local party organisation include scions of landed families; some militants cynically observe that large farmers in areas of communist strength support the party to escape labour troubles.

Kerala has unique legislation favourable to agricultural workers because of the successful left mobilisation, electoral and otherwise, but

⁴⁵ The strongest union, the KSKTU, reported an annual membership of 50,750 in Palghat for 1979-80, more than double the figure for the year of the KAWA (1974), and far greater than the second largest, Calicut, which reported 39,000. Data from KSKTU headquarters, Alleppey. Nationwide, less than one per cent of the agricultural labourers are even nominally organised. Though a small state, Kerala accounted for 42.4 per cent of the All-Indian membership in the CPI(M) labourer union, followed at a distance by Andhra Pradesh. AIAWU (All-Indian Agricultural Workers Union), *Proceedings, Report and Resolutions*, New Delhi: P K Kunjachun, 1988, p 54.

⁴⁶ Compare with T J Nossiter, *Marxist State Governments in India*, London: Pinter, 1988, pp 179-80.

⁴⁷ Compare with P K B Nayar, 'Agrarian movements in rural development: a case study', typescript, Kariavattom: University of Kerala, 1979.

continued electoral success for the left dictates strategy locally which undermines that legislation. To take the most observable example, no labourer in Nallepilli received the legal minimum wage. District figures confirm this phenomenon (see Table 2); the declining nominal wage rate after 1975 is technically illegal. When asked what a fair wage would be, the modal response was simply, 'the government wage'. Union leaders are aware of the strategic power of landowners and of the real, though exaggerated, economic dilemma posed by higher wages and volatile product prices. Their response, congruent with the party's position, is corporatist; compromises on implementation of the KAWA are hammered out through the district Industrial Relations Committee, composed of representatives of farmers, labourers and the bureaucracy. In explicit recognition of the logic of commodity reform and electoral imperatives, the unions support the demands for higher produce prices, greater subsidies of inputs and better treatment of Kerala by Delhi in terms of investment, *regional* minimum wages, and greater fiscal flexibility for the state government. To take a poignant example, farmer opposition to funding and keeping records for the provident fund of the KAWA was accommodated by generalising the pension to all retired labourers, paid for by the state, but the programme had to be (temporarily) suspended for fiscal reasons. Taxes in Kerala as a percentage of production are already the highest in India;⁴⁸ deficits are chronic. The fiscal dependence of so poor a state constrains political options, regardless of the strength of local mobilisation.

Though there are countervailing dynamics, primarily the greater conscientiousness of farmers as a response to the cost-price squeeze, net productivity consequences of the stalemated class conflict are almost certainly negative (not in absolute terms, but relative to potential). Total paddy production and acreage continue to decline. The form of labour control characteristic of the 'feudal' traditional system was uniquely suited to the technical requirements of paddy agriculture. But that system combined extraordinary discipline of labour and great flexibility in its deployment with a property structure and associated social system inimical to scientific agriculture.⁴⁹ The most radical possibility for resolution of the stalemate, expressed by both farmers and labourers, is that 'just as the tenants got the land from landlords, the labourers will get the land from farmers'. Electoral coalition strategies

⁴⁸ A R Rouyer, 'Political capacity and the decline of fertility in India', *American Political Science Review* 81 (2) June 1987, p 459.

⁴⁹ T W Shea, *The Land Tenure Structure of Malabar and its Influence upon Capital Formation in Agriculture*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, PhD Dissertation, 1959.

suggest otherwise. It is more likely that the state will continue to pick up the pieces, subsidising costs to owners and raising procurement prices, while subsidising consumption and providing old-age security for labourers. But the fiscal strain is considerable; higher paddy prices in a society of poor, politicised people inevitably means subsidising rice costs to consumers. Even if that fiscal burden can be borne, resources have opportunity costs. The state government seeks to increase off-farm employment,⁵⁰ but it is difficult to lure capital when labour is so well-organised, protected, militant and expensive. Indeed, capital flight is more likely than capital influx; labour-intensive industries have already experienced a significant exodus to neighbouring states.⁵¹ Decisions made in Delhi are thus critical for success of the corporatist-distributionist strategy of Kerala's communists. Absent is an accumulationist strategy attuned to the intransigence and incapacity of the national state.

Conclusions and implications

The strength of the 'moral economy' model of peasant politics lay in its extension of Karl Polanyi's great insight:⁵² the making of market society, elevating market outcomes above the social norms in which economic relations had been previously 'embedded', produces profound dislocation and propels social forces to re-establish guarantees of economic security and morally acceptable outcomes. Moral outrage at the dislocations of market dynamics preceded the communist movement in Kerala, but it was only under communist leadership that chaotic jacqueries gave way to organised movements.⁵³ In organising around abolition

⁵⁰ Percentage of the district labour force in manufacturing was only 7.03 per cent in 1971, compared with a state-wide figure of 11.46 per cent. The study area is especially devoid of alternative employment, except for the periodic public works and construction. The annual increase in factory jobs over the decade was greater than the rate of population growth, but on such a small base— an average daily employment of 6964 in 1970—that most of the population increase had to be absorbed in agriculture, despite a stagnant capital base. In the Padoor sample, general immiserisation was not evident because of significant increases in off-farm employment (a match factory, infusion of investment by workers returning from West Asia—the 'mini-Gulf' phenomenon—tapioca loading, transport and so on); employment in the paddy sector exhibited the same dynamics as Nallepalli.

⁵¹ M A Oommen, 'Report on the shifting of industries from Kerala', (tentative title), typescript, Trichur: Department of Economics, Calicut University, 1979; Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, *Report on the Survey of Unemployment in Kerala 1987*, p 7.

⁵² K Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944.

⁵³ On peasant movements and communist power, see K Kannan, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles*, pp 35–144; R Herring, 'Stealing Congress Thunder'; T. Paulini, *Agrarian Movements and Reforms in India: the case of Kerala*, Saarbrücken: Verlag Breitenbach, 1979, pp 127–325; T K Oomen, *Social Transformation in Rural India*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1984, part III and the accounts by participants and scholars cited in R Herring, 'Stealing Congress Thunder'.

of landlordism, colonial rule and social indignities, the left mobilised a powerful force which was translated into electoral strength after Independence. But as communist theoretician E M S Namboodiripad has noted, that strength was based on 'peasant' demands and anti-imperialism.⁵⁴ The tactical radicalism of tenant middle-peasants gave way to conservatism once their demands were met. With the end of colonialism and the transformation of peasants to Marshallian farmers, the left implicitly accepted the moral economy of market agriculture. With the dilemmas of collectivist forms well known,⁵⁵ and experiments in Kerala dismal, deflection of class conflict into the arena of an evolving *public* moral economy became inexorable.

The moral-economy paradigm curiously confined its logic to pre-capitalist village society, which it romanticises. That society in Palghat entailed extreme subjugation and abuse, destitution, and significant insecurity despite ideational paternalism. These very characteristics facilitated communist electoral success which completed an agrarian bourgeois revolution, producing a system of fully commoditised and largely depersonalised social relations of production, no longer embedded in connections of servitude, diffuse claims and extra-economic subjugation.

But the existence of capitalist agriculture does not guarantee the utility of neoclassical models for understanding that social formation. 'Institutionalists' and 'substantivists' among economists have a crucial point: the historical origins and institutional structure of any particular economy are vital components of its working logic. In Kerala, these institutions were, somewhat ironically, forged in the struggle against a pre-capitalist formation almost 'feudal' in character. The outcome of those conflicts imposed a public moral economy as boundaries within which the market could work, recognising the moral claims of tenants and then permanent labourers to the extent that was politically and fiscally practicable. Whereas the 'feudal' class structure was attacked frontally, the capitalist structure is regulated.

For labour, regulated capitalist agriculture has distinct and recognised advantages: most importantly, freedom from physical abuse, sexual exploitation and demeaning social observances (of dress, language, movement). Despite exposure to greater risks of unemployment, labourers value their freedom. Permanency institutionalises one of the few genuine benefits of the pre-capitalist order—some security of employment. The state-mandated agricultural involution of the KAWA

⁵⁴ R Herring, 'Stealing Congress Thunder', pp 396, 415.

⁵⁵ R Herring, *Land to the Tiller*, chapter 9.

spreads and guarantees employment to those with the strongest moral claims—the attached labourers. For casual labourers, the benefits of capitalist agriculture that are usually posited have not materialised.

Given the large size of the non-agricultural labour force, divisions of caste and religion, and the imperfect translation of class into political allegiance, electoral communism cannot risk the exclusion of farmers. The dilemma for the left is the conflict between poorly compensated capital and destitute labour. Following embourgeoisement of the tenants, recapturing the coalition of small farmers and labourers in capitalist agriculture leads inexorably to the political strategy of commodity reform movements. But sectoral politics is no real solution for the left. Benefits to labourers are of the familiar indirect and 'trickle-down' variety. If expanding the distributive pie is the dominant strategy, there is no reason for labourers and farmers not to join associations of the right, which are more likely to receive cooperation from Delhi. Alternative associations have expanded significantly in Palghat district and in Kerala generally.

At both state and national levels, the problematic of reconciling interests of workers and farmers has generated tactical concern, but no theoretical breakthroughs. At the Faizpur session of the newly formed All-India Kisan Sabha (Peasant Association) in 1936, N G Ranja said in his Presidential address:

It is a trite saying that the future lies with the peasants and workers struggling and suffering hand in hand for the achievement of a Socialist state. It is the sacred duty of every one of our *kisans* to fraternize with the workers and to meet them more than half way in satisfying their demands. Particular care has to be taken by our *kisan* comrades to minimize any possible conflict between *kisans* and agricultural workers by making our *kisans* grant timely and humane conditions of employment to workers. . .⁵⁶

In case the *kisan* comrades did not comply, the session adopted a resolution demanding 'statutory provision for ensuring the living wage and suitable working conditions for the agricultural labourers'.⁵⁷ By 1986, the All-India Agricultural Workers Union of the CPI(M) met in Palghat for only its second national conference. The delegates concluded that 'there is a conflict of interest between sections of the peasantry and agricultural workers on the question of wages'.⁵⁸ 'Even in the state of Kerala where both the peasant organization and agricultural

⁵⁶ M A Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1974, p 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p 13.

⁵⁸ AIAWU: (All-India Agricultural Workers Union), *Proceedings, Resolutions, Other Documents*, New Delhi: P K Kunjachan, 1986, p 57.

workers Union are a powerful force, there are occasional conflicts about conflicting demands and even straining of relations to some extent.⁵⁹ The solution was seen as pressing the demands of both classes simultaneously with coordinating committees to resolve differences, recognising the 'just demands of the peasantry'. But while recognising the wage conflict, and strained relations in Kerala, the representative from West Bengal argued that Bengal's labourers 'unanimously agreed' that their issues should be taken up through the peasant association until a separate organisation of labourers could be formed in the state.⁶⁰

Whether the wage conflict is with the 'upper strata' of the peasantry or some (unspecified) 'sections of the peasantry',⁶¹ the class analysis is not very Marxian. If profits connote surplus value extraction, the wage conflict is not with 'peasants' but with petty capitalists. The programme of the party is not to resolve or energise that class conflict, but to deflect it into demands for 'remunerative prices' and scissors politics, into the federal arena with demands for more state autonomy and resources, and into the distributive arena, where state governments attempt to shoulder the burden of subsistence guarantees. Field work and aggregate data suggest that communists in Kerala have yet to generate an accumulationist strategy; local corporatism channels class conflicts but resolves neither them nor the crisis in the paddy sector.⁶²

Acceptance of the electoral route has inevitably distorted priorities of the party; communists in Kerala are victims of their success. Having mobilised a sufficient coalition to attain office (not power in any sense Lenin would understand), the dynamics of maintaining and servicing that coalition take precedence. Successful political parties attract opportunists and time-servers. There is enormous pressure to adapt to the routines of Indian electoral politics in which the state, not the party, is the locus of 'development' and the party is the locus of mobilising votes.⁶³ To the extent that the party forms yet another branch of Mancur Olson's distributive coalition or becomes a petty and junior partner in Bardhan's proprietary elite triangle,⁶⁴ the material base for

⁵⁹ AIAWL, *Second All-India Conference* (Palthat), New Delhi: P K Kunjachan, 1986, p 61.

⁶⁰ AIAWL, *Proceedings, Resolutions, Other Documents*, p 43.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p 22.

⁶² For comparable analysis of agrarian communism in West Bengal, on the issues of distributive politics and federalism, and the absence of an accumulationist strategy, see S Bandyopadhyaya and D Von Eschen, 'The impact of politics on rural production and distribution', *Association for Asian Studies, Annual Meetings*, San Francisco, 1988, pp 52-58.

⁶³ Compare with T J Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, Berkeley: University of California, 1981.

⁶⁴ M Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*, New Haven: Yale University, 1982; P K Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

the only non-revolutionary resolution of the class dilemmas noted above becomes impossible to attain.

Communists in Kerala have failed to make the difficult transition from a social transformational force to a force for accumulation; rather the party has become lodged in the interstices of distributive politics, attempting to fend off class conflicts which would erode its distributive position. The same can be said for the Bengal party, though its transformational role is to date more circumscribed. Rural people in Kerala see the party as a shadow of its quasi-revolutionary former self. Party activists are sincere in their defence of rights won by the rural poor, but in the context of market and electoral constraints. The difficulty of the transition is underlined by dilemmas of communist practice on a global scale: what is the place of the market in a political formation which seeks to differentiate itself from market capitalism? This question, resonating with Polanyi's concern about the 'great transformation', seems to generate more debate about China than within China, but is of universal import. In both Kerala and West Bengal, parties which take as their distinctive legitimation the eventual overthrow of capitalism are trapped in the dilemma of generating dynamism in a system of regulated capitalism. Successful communist movements in India have been instrumental in completing the agrarian bourgeois revolution, sweeping aside the more grotesque forms of bondage and social oppression in favour of the special kind of equality provided by market society and political democracy. The final dilemma is that those changes, important as they are, fall short of the aspirations of the communists' mass base.

The irrelevance of development studies*

Development, however defined, is a slow and uneven process. Indeed, in some areas we seem to be going backwards rather than forwards. In material terms, food production per capita may be declining throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, while real incomes stagnate and the provision of basic services continues to lag behind population growth.¹ In terms of people's control over the forces which shape their lives (a definition of development that I prefer), progress seems equally fragile. The world's poor remain very much in the grip of national and international forces over which they have little influence. Yet, at the same time, we face an unprecedented expansion in the quantity of development research being undertaken, advice being proffered, and projects being financed. As Lloyd Timberlake has pointed out, advising Africa has become a major industry, with at least 80,000 expatriates at work south of the Sahara at a cost of more than US\$4 billion a year.² The volume of magazines, books, periodicals and papers concerning development continues to increase, while there are so many conferences on development that attendance has become almost a profession in itself.

Clearly, the links between research and development are complex, and few would posit a simple, linear relationship between the two. However, the fact that this immense outpouring of information and advice is having demonstrably little effect on the problems it seeks to address should at least give us cause for concern. Why is it that our increasing knowledge of the Third World does not enable solutions to be found? Is this because practitioners refuse to listen? Is 'development' a matter to be left to practitioners anyway? Are there other, stronger forces that prevent the right action being taken? Or could it be, in Paul Devitt's words, that 'our kind of knowledge is simply not enough'?³

* The views expressed in this paper are the author's own views and not necessarily those of OXFAM.

¹ For example, the FAO's indices of food production per capita (each country's average for 1979-81 = 100) show a fall from 94 in 1974 to 88 in 1986 for Ethiopia, from 116 to 93 for Kenya, and from 133 to 85 for Mozambique. Figures from *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, April 1986 and April 1987, Rome: FAO, 1987.

² L. Timberlake, *Africa in Crisis*, London: Earthscan, 1985, pp 8-10.

³ P. Devitt, *Good Local Practice* (mimeographed) Oxford: OXFAM, 1986.

This article looks at one aspect of the relationship between research and development which appears to me to underlie our current predicament: the absence of strong links between *understanding* and *action*. The weakness (indeed the non-existence) of these links makes much current thinking irrelevant, in the literal sense, to the problems it pretends to address. As a result, many of us who are involved in the field of development studies have become part of the problems of underdevelopment, rather than being part of the solutions to these problems.

Pleas for change in the methodology of development studies are not new. Indeed, much of the argument contained in this article has already been stated elsewhere.⁴ However, these new approaches appear to be making little headway, perhaps because the politics of development studies are against them. There seems to me to be a need to reinforce constantly the message that fundamental changes are essential. The first section of this article looks at conventional approaches to development studies and outlines some of the factors which underlie their failure to come to grips with the problems they seek to address. In the next section I look at how development studies might be restructured so as to increase their usefulness, focusing on the methodology of 'participatory' or 'action' research and the practical issues surrounding its use. By way of conclusion, I question whether such a restructuring is possible without much deeper changes in attitudes and values among academics and practitioners alike. Throughout, the term 'development studies' is used to cover all forms of writing and talking about development, as well as forms of action (such as training and even project work) which grow out of these processes. When I use the terms 'the poor', 'poor people', and 'popular participation', I am referring specifically to the most vulnerable and exploited groups in communities and societies.

Conventional approaches to development studies

Although some progress has been made in exploring alternative approaches, inspired particularly by the early work of Paulo Freire, development studies are still based largely on traditional 'banking' concepts of education. These traditional concepts embody a series of attitudes that contribute to the irrelevance of much of their output to the

⁴ See especially the recent work of Robert Chambers: *Rural Development: putting the last first*, London: Longman, 1983; 'Putting Last Thinking First: a professional revolution', *Third World Affairs* 1985, pp 78-94; 'Putting The Last First' in P Ekins (ed), *The Living Economy: a new economics in the making*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, pp 305-22. For a more general critique, see N Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

problems of the world in which we live. Most importantly, people are treated as objects to be studied rather than as subjects of their own development; there is therefore a separation between the researcher and the object of research, and between understanding and action. Research and education come to be dominated by content rather than form or method; they become processes which focus on the transmission of information, usually of a technical kind, from one person to another. The 'transmitter' and the 'receiver' of information are distanced from each other by a basic inequality in the amount of technical knowledge they each possess. The most extreme example of this process is the 'empirical' questionnaire-based survey designed, analysed and controlled by people outside the community which is being studied. However, the same attitudes pervade most forms of writing and talking about development to one degree or another. As Nicholas Maxwell puts it, 'Insofar as academic inquiry does try to help to promote human welfare, it does so . . . by seeking to improve knowledge of various aspects of the world.'⁵ Let us look at five crucial types of problem which arise when such an approach is adopted.

Experts, 'expats', and the devaluation of popular knowledge

The natural consequence of a concern for technical interpretations of reality is that knowledge, and the power to control it, become concentrated in the hands of those with the technical skills necessary to understand the language and methods being used.⁶ The idea that development consists of a transfer of skills or information creates a role for the expert as the only person capable of mediating the transfer of these skills from one person or society to another. Herein lies the justification, if justification it is, for the 80,000 expatriate 'experts' at work south of the Sahara today. They are there to promote 'development', defined implicitly as a transfer of knowledge from 'developed' to 'underdeveloped' societies. Yet this 'expert' status is usually quite spurious. As Adrian Adams has pointed out, 'In Britain a doctor is a doctor; he'll be a medical expert if he goes to help halve the birthrate in Bangladesh . . . what matters is the halo of impartial prestige his skills lend him, allowing him to neutralise conflict-laden encounters . . . and disguise political issues, for a time, as technical ones.'⁷

⁵ N Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, p.2.

⁶ See D Hall, A Gillette and R Tandon, *Creating Knowledge: a monopoly? Participatory research in development*, Toronto: International Council for Adult Education, 1982.

⁷ A Adams, 'An Open Letter to a Young Researcher', *African Affairs* 78 (313) 1979, pp 453-79.

Of course, this is not simply a problem of the North. The influence of such ideas also permeates much official thinking about development in the Third World, through the elites that mimic the behaviour of their counterparts in Europe and North America. Anyone who has discussed development issues with African extension workers in health or agriculture will recognise immediately the deadening effect of conventional approaches to education and training, passed down to the grassroots by successive levels of a hierarchy schooled in the language and methods of the expert. Yet, as a report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology points out, 'The fundamental problem confronting agriculture is not the adoption . . . of any particular set of inputs or economic arrangements or of organisational patterns . . . Rather, it is to build in an attitude of experiment, trial and error, innovation and the adoption of new ideas.'⁸ This conclusion is not unique to agriculture. In all sectors of development, the adoption of problem-solving approaches is much more important than communicating particular packages of technical information. If people can analyse, design, implement and evaluate their work in a critical fashion, they stand a good chance of achieving their objectives. However, a system of education and training that relies on experts will never be able to do this, because the attitudes of the expert prevent people from thinking for themselves. To quote Nicholas Maxwell again, 'Whereas for the philosophy of knowledge, the fundamental kind of rational learning is acquiring knowledge, for the philosophy of wisdom the fundamental kind of rational learning is learning how to live, how to see, to experience, to participate in and to create what is of value in existence.'⁹ I shall return to this theme later in my argument.

This is not a problem unique to research, education and training. It also underlies the dangerous obsession with 'projects' that characterises the work of most development agencies. The logical corollary of a world-view which sees development as a series of technical transfers mediated by experts is that, given a sufficient number of situations, or projects, in which these transfers can be made, 'development' will occur. But, as Sithembiso Nyoni has pointed out, no country in the world has ever developed itself through projects;¹⁰ development results from a long process of experiment and innovation through which people build up the skills, knowledge and self-confidence necessary to shape their

⁸ Quoted in R Bunch, *Two Ears of Corn: a guide to people-centred agricultural improvement*, Oklahoma City: World Neighbors, 1982, p 138.

⁹ N Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, p 66.

¹⁰ S Nyoni, the Director of the Organisation of Rural Associations For Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe, made this observation in an address given to OXFAM staff and supporters in Oxford in 1985.

environment in ways which foster progress toward goals such as economic growth, equity in income distribution, and political freedom. At root then, development is about processes of enrichment, empowerment and participation, which the technocratic, project-oriented view of the world simply cannot accommodate.¹¹

A further consequence of the predominant technical view of development is the devaluation of indigenous knowledge (which grows out of the direct experience of poor people) in the search for solutions to the problems that face us. This is inevitable if knowledge is associated with formal education and training. The result is that general solutions manufactured from the outside are offered to specific problems which are highly localised. The practice of development work teaches us that problems are often specific in their complexity to particular times and places. A number of recent studies have recognised this in their exploration of the complex relationships which evolve over time between people and their environment within geographically-restricted areas.¹² These relationships are dynamic, seasonal and often unpredictable. They cannot be subjected to general models and it is therefore difficult for conventional approaches to knowledge to accommodate them. What is required, as Paul Richards has argued, is a 'people's science' which uses local knowledge to explore local solutions to local problems.¹³ Such a 'science' differs radically in approach from the traditional one, which ignores indigenous knowledge or relegates it to a subordinate position. To take just one example: in his investigations of the relationship between nutrition and cash-cropping in Zambia's Northern Province, Barrie Sharpe has found tremendous diversity in the informal networks of exchange and innovation that have evolved over hundreds of years to ensure peoples' survival in the face of hostile environmental conditions.¹⁴ These networks are highly localised. Indigenous knowledge of this kind could have been used as the basis of a successful development policy for the region. Instead, government and aid agencies have applied pressure to commercialise the cultivation of maize on a large scale. This is threatening the survival of these informal networks, and with it, the nutrition of children in families which had previously

¹¹ See C. Elliot, *Comfortable Compassion? Poverty, power and the church*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987.

¹² See P. Richards, *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution*, London: Hutchinson, 1985; R. Chambers, *Rural Development*; P. Devitt, *Good Local Practice*; M. Vaughan, *The Story of an African Famine. Gender and famine in twentieth-century Malawi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

¹³ P. Richards, *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution*.

¹⁴ B. Sharpe, 'Interim Report on Nutritional Anthropology Investigation', (mimeographed) Mpika: ODA IRDP, 1987.

found a better balance between the conflicting demands of food, cash and welfare.

A final consequence of the technocratic approach to knowledge is a refusal to accept the role of *emotion* in understanding the problems of development. Development research is full of a spurious objectivity; this is a natural consequence of divorcing subject from object in the process of education. Any hint of 'subjectivity' is seized upon immediately as 'unscientific' and therefore not worthy of inclusion in 'serious' studies of development. Yet it is impossible to understand real-life problems fully unless we can grasp the multitude of constraints, imperfections and emotions that shape the actions and decisions of real, living people. People act on issues about which they have strong feelings, 'so all education and development projects should start by identifying the issues which local people speak about with excitement, hope, fear, anxiety or anger'.¹⁵ This is precisely what conventional research does not do, because it divorces itself from the everyday context within which an understanding of these emotions can develop. Unless, as Raymond Williams puts it, we move beyond the current separation of emotion and intelligence and accept emotion as 'a direct concern with people, the key to the new order', we will never develop a better understanding of the problems that face us.¹⁶

The net effect of the characteristics briefly explored above is to render technocratic approaches to development research, training and practice irrelevant to the problems they seek to address. Expert-oriented views of development distance the researcher from reality, create barriers which promote ignorance, and perpetuate inappropriate models based on the views of outsiders. The crucial issue of 'relevance' is explored in more detail below.

'First' and 'last' in values and priorities

Conventional approaches to development studies embody certain values, or 'mind sets', which act as a barrier to the genuine understanding of issues and problems; as Robert Chambers has written in detail about these mind sets, a brief summary of his conclusions will suffice here. Chambers emphasises that the 'values and preferences of first professionals are typically polar opposites of last realities'.¹⁷ That is, whereas researchers and advisers tend to prefer the qualities of mod-

¹⁵ A Hope, S Timmel and C Hodzi, *Training for Transformation: a handbook for community workers*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, p 8.

¹⁶ R Williams, *Towards 2000*, London: Penguin, 1983, p 266.

¹⁷ R Chambers, 'Putting the Last First', p 307.

ernity, quantification, prediction and tidiness (to name but four), the reality of those being 'researched' reflects preferences for the traditional, non-quantifiable, unpredictable and messy. The mismatch between these two sets of preferences results in a series of biases in the perceiver that obscure a real understanding of the situation at hand. The 'gender blindness' of much current research and practice is another component of the same process. This is an inevitable consequence of the values and attitudes which we adopt as a result of long exposure to conventional approaches to education and training, and is reinforced by our inability (or unwillingness) to change these approaches. The 'rural development tourism' practised by many academics and development agencies is a classic example of such attitudes at work.

The values and attitudes embodied in the conventional approach are essentially selfish. As Odhiambo Anacleto has pointed out, much conventional research is useless 'because it is for the satisfaction of the researcher rather than the researched'.¹⁸ Or, as a Senegalese villager put it to Adrian Adams, 'Les chercheurs ne cherchent pas la vérité.'¹⁹ Yet the one characteristic which is essential if a genuine dialogue is to be established with poor people is humility; humility on the part of the researcher or practitioner towards the subject of his or her attention. This is impossible if people are treated as objects to be studied. It is the absence of humility that places many academics in attitudes of self-appointed superiority over people who are more directly involved in practical development work. Instead of cooperating, academics and practitioners often see themselves as adversaries rather than collaborators. This is one reason why links between research and practice are so weak (see below). We will continue to speak past each other instead of to each other until this sense of inequality is eradicated.

Lest development workers feel themselves immune to this criticism, we should remind ourselves that the same attitudes pervade the work of many governmental, multilateral, and even non-governmental organisations (NGOs). How many of us really possess the humility to learn from the poor? Working for an NGO is no guarantee that the right approach will be adopted. Many NGOs are subject to the same prejudices as elitist researchers. The first essential step toward greater relevance in development studies is to change the way we think and act, so that we become able to listen and to learn 'from below'.

¹⁸ O Anacleto, quoted in Y Kassam and K Mustafa, *Participatory Research: an emerging alternative methodology in social science research*, Nairobi: African Adult Education Association, 1982, p 110.

¹⁹ Quoted in A Adams, 'An Open Letter', p 473.

The monopoly of knowledge and the control of power

The field of development studies is dominated by the North and, to a lesser extent, by the Third World elites whom we have trained and sponsored. The prodigious output of books and journals from Northern universities rarely has any positive influence over the lives of poor people. This is partly because materials are priced so highly that even libraries in the Third World cannot afford to buy them. More importantly, even when it is accessible such material is often irrelevant because of the biases and misperceptions that form the subject-matter of this paper. The most complete divorce of all lies between research output and the subjects of this research—poor people themselves. The barriers created by jargon, language, literacy, price, availability and method create a situation where people are denied access to the information which is supposed to concern them. The usefulness of research then depends upon its effectiveness in changing attitudes among elite groups in a direction that will ultimately enable poor people to think and act for themselves. If research does not do this it serves only to perpetuate the monopoly over knowledge which lies at the root of the problem in the first place.

Northern domination over education and training is now being challenged by the growth of Third World centres of knowledge. Unfortunately, these institutions often take on exactly those characteristics which render their Northern counterparts ineffective as catalysts for development. They over-emphasise the acquisition of technical skills and fail to challenge the prejudices which prevent people from 'learning from below'. Thankfully, this situation is beginning to change as more institutions emphasising 'participatory' approaches to problem-solving find their voice. The growth of participatory research networks throughout the Third World is particularly encouraging.

Increasingly, 'popular participation' is accepted as the only real basis for successful development. In reality, however, the practice of development studies continues to be anti-participatory. This contradiction shows itself in the advocacy of participation by writers who do not allow the subjects of their research to participate, and by development agencies who parrot the virtues of participation while telling their partners in the Third World what to do and how to do it. Recipients of Northern NGO aid must demonstrate a high degree of internal democracy in order to qualify for assistance. Yet the donor agencies themselves would never qualify on these grounds; they consistently refuse to share their own power while insisting on 'popular participation' as the

fundamental criterion for development work overseas. This is the same form of hypocrisy that allows Northern thinkers to use the Third World as a laboratory for social, economic, and political experiments which they are unable (or unwilling) to conduct in their own societies. Development has become a spectator sport, with a vast array of experts and others looking into the 'fishbowl' of the Third World from the safety and comfort of their armchairs. We need to remind ourselves that the principles underlying participatory approaches to development are universal, and any attempt to restrict them to the developing world is meaningless.

Underlying all these problems is a simple inequality of power between North and South. Northern academics are able to monopolise control over the process of research because they have the resources to do so; Northern agencies are able to control the funding of development work because they also have the resources to do so. Knowledge is power, and the control of knowledge is the control of power. Power is the central component of development and without it there is little that the poor can do to change their circumstances. Centralised control over development studies is therefore directly anti-developmental in its effects. It undermines local self-confidence and prevents people at grass-roots level from acquiring the skills and abilities which they need to analyse and solve problems for themselves. It prevents the transformation of people into agents of their own development by retarding the sharing of knowledge and information. This monopoly needs to be broken so that people become able to participate fully in the creation and use of their own knowledge. If this is not done, research and information will continue to circulate in a closed circuit from which poor people will always be excluded.

Understanding and changing the world: which comes first?

The famous inscription on Karl Marx's gravestone in Highgate Cemetery, London, poses a dichotomy which is central to the irrelevance of much development thinking today. Marx emphasised that changing the world, rather than understanding or interpreting it, is the prime task of the revolutionary. Conventional approaches to development studies posit the opposite view: that understanding the world must precede the ability successfully to change it, if indeed the link between understanding and change is made at all. In fact, there is no real dichotomy here since the processes of change and understanding should be synchronous. They must occur together if either is to be effective. We cannot change the world successfully unless we understand the way it works;

but neither can we understand the world fully unless we are involved in some way with the processes that change it. The problem with much in development studies today is that they are divorced completely from these practical processes of change, as I have sought to show.

Listen to the following quotation from Canaan Banana, the former President of Zimbabwe:

Whereas an armchair intellectual of rural development, lost in the labyrinth of misty theories and postulations, can afford to oversimplify matters and get away with it, a practitioner of rural development, that man or woman in the constant glare of various vicious and different shades of rural poverty and suffering, cannot. Time and again, now and in the future, they face the bleak disjuncture and mismatch between lengthy and laborious theories, decked out in figures and ornate expressions, and the ugly, undecorated and sordid reality of rural poverty.²⁰

Banana's point is that a proper understanding of the problems of development requires a measure of involvement in the process of development itself. To this extent, development cannot be 'studied' at all; we can participate in the processes that underlie development and observe, record and analyse what we see, but we can never be relevant to problems in the abstract. However, this is precisely the position of much development research today. The reality of development studies bears little or no relation to the reality it seeks to address.

Researchers from the political left have been no more successful in this respect than commentators from the right, who form perhaps a more convenient target for criticism. As Adrian Adams points out, 'radical' critiques of conventional approaches to development have done little to change the way in which we look at this central relationship between understanding and action. 'All they have done is to create, alongside the activities of development experts, a body of ideas which cannot embody themselves in action and so proliferate in helpless parasitic symptoms with that which they criticise.'²¹ The usual conclusion of these Marxist and Neo-Marxist critiques is that 'progress' is impossible without revolutionary changes in the structure of (capitalist) society. This is hardly an original or a useful conclusion to those who are actively working for change, by definition and inevitably within the social and political structures in which they live.

²⁰ C Banana, quoted in M de Graaf, *The Importance of People: experiences, lessons and ideas on rural development training in Zimbabwe—Hlekweni and beyond*, Bulawayo: Hlekweni Friends Rural Service Centre, 1987, p 9.

²¹ A Adams, 'An Open Letter', p 477.

Our tendency to separate the processes of understanding and change leads naturally on to irrelevance because, while abstract research cannot be applied in practice, practice is often deficient because it fails to understand the real causes and character of the problems it seeks to address. Research and action become two parallel lines that never meet. Unless and until they do, we will neither understand nor change the world successfully.

Participation and relevance

'Relevance' has been a recurring theme throughout this article. If, for the reasons given above, we are not being relevant to peoples' problems, how can we change the way we work so that we begin to become so? The key to this process lies in the participation of poor people in constructing our understanding of the way in which their world operates. Conventional approaches to development studies misperceive this relationship and thus are fatally flawed.

In part, this is because participation has become a vogue word, generating a great deal of sloppy thinking in the process. We now use the word to cover a wide variety of situations without specifying who is participating in what, and why. The real importance of participation lies in the way in which solutions are found to the problems that face us. For it should be obvious by now that a genuine understanding of these problems can come about only through listening and learning 'from below'. Because of the distance that exists between researcher and researched in conventional approaches to development, we are often prevented from doing this. To put it simply, we cannot be relevant to people unless we understand their problems; and we cannot understand these problems unless they tell us about them. This is more difficult than it sounds. Not only does it require a reversal in traditional attitudes towards the poor, but, as we shall see below, it necessitates a completely different type of research altogether.

'Knowledge is only useful if the listener needs the knowledge, understands it, wants to use it, *can* use it, and is not prevented by any circumstances from using it. It is also useful only when the knowledge is relevant to the problem in question.'²² It is remarkable how often this obvious conclusion is ignored. For example, people are told to eat 'nutritious foods' that are not available or affordable locally; or told to bring their children to Under-Fives Clinics which are inaccessible by

²² A Klouda, *Primary Health Care: so who cares?*, Lilongwe: Private Hospitals Association of Malawi, 1986, p 5.10.

virtue of physical or social distance (many women being too embarrassed to attend as they do not wish to be compared with the better-off); or told to produce bigger crops without having access to the factors of production which would make this possible. All these are examples of irrelevant advice, based on inadequate understanding and involvement. Instead of recognising these inadequacies and finding out why people are not following advice, the usual reaction is to label them 'stupid' or 'lazy'. In fact, it is the 'experts' who are 'stupid' (because they do not understand the real problems at hand) and who are 'lazy' (because they do not bother to question people on their own perceptions). In much current development work, the advice we put forward cannot be used locally because it is manufactured under completely different circumstances. The only way to ensure its relevance is by fostering the participation of poor people in identifying their own problems, priorities and solutions. If this is done, and we have the ability and willingness to listen and to learn, we can never be irrelevant to people's needs. Our development efforts will then begin to become very much more effective.

A better model for the future

So far, I have explored in brief a number of factors that contribute to the irrelevance of conventional approaches to development studies. How, then, can development studies be restructured so that they begin to provide more effective answers to the problems which face us? In my view, the key to this challenge lies in bringing together research and practice, or understanding and change, into a single, unitary process, through an alternative model of research which is fully participatory.

Participatory research

'Participatory' or 'action' research is not new; it is simply a new name for something that poor people have been doing for themselves for centuries. As an old Mexican proverb has it, *Hacemos el camino caminando* (We make the path by walking it); that is, we find solutions to the problems we encounter through direct participation in a long process of trial and error. The spread of the Western empirical tradition has obscured this simple, indigenous process by divorcing subject from object and restricting research capability to those with the necessary technical skills.

While the basis of participatory research existed long before Paulo

Freire, he was the first to conceptualise the theory behind the methodology, and it is from him that later refinements of the basic approach have taken their inspiration. The key to his thought is summarised by Charles Elliot as follows: 'The purpose of education is to allow people to become subjects rather than objects, to control their own destinies rather than be the victims of the desires and social processes of others.'²³ Elliot goes on to point out that 'The political and programmatic implications [of this approach] are dynamite, for they mean that the end of education becomes a total change in the way individuals and groups relate to and deal with each other.'²⁴ The Freirean approach is revolutionary in its implications for development studies, and this is why it has been resisted, rejected or ignored by so many. For, if taken seriously, it means that researchers (or practitioners) must accept that they will be changed by the results of their research (or practice); must be accountable to the people who form the subjects of their work; and must be prepared to see the worth of that work judged according to the relevance it has to the lives of the community in question.²⁵ Few of us seem prepared to do this.

We can see immediately how such an approach differs from conventional thinking, and how it overcomes many of the constraints identified so far. Most importantly, the separation between understanding and change disappears because research and action become part of the same historical process. Relevance is assured because research grows out of people's own perceptions and is controlled by them. In this way, understanding and action gain mutual strength from each other, while people can begin to take more control over their lives. It is obvious that if this approach is to work effectively, the methods used must not contradict the premises on which it is based: it must not treat people as passive learners who require the input of knowledge or information from the outside. 'An approach to education which focuses on content may increase an individual's knowledge but does not thereby enable him or her to take action.'²⁶ Hence, participatory research is a vehicle for understanding and changing the world simultaneously.

²³ Quoted in C Elliot, *Comfortable Compassion*, p 86. For Freire's own analysis, see P Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin, 1972.

²⁴ C Elliot, *Comfortable Compassion*, p 86.

²⁵ S George, *Ill Fares the Land: essays on food, hunger and power*, London: Writers and Readers, 1984, p 64.

²⁶ G Fly, quoted in S Nyoni, 'Participation in the context of rural development in Zimbabwe', in M de Graaf, *The Importance of People*, p 125.

What participatory research is not

Unfortunately, 'participatory research' has been misused in the same way as 'participation' to describe a whole range of activities that have little or nothing to do with the true meaning of the term. Even the World Bank and the United Nations agencies have joined the throng in calling for more participation in their development projects and for 'participant observation' in research and evaluation. Participation is seen as a mechanism for cost recovery in projects initiated from the outside; of reducing the costs of building and infrastructural programmes planned by governments; and of improving the accuracy of research carried out by and for external agencies.²⁷ None of these usages is truly participatory. The crucial point is to see who sets the agenda and who controls the research process—both the inputs and the outputs. Most attempts at participatory research by multilateral agencies have been unsuccessful because the all-important link between participation and control has not been made. For all the reasons given above, the United Nations system is at heart 'anti-participatory', as Peter Oakley and David Marsden put it.²⁸ Participation tends to be used as a technique to improve the efficacy of research or programming, rather than as a means of facilitating people's own development efforts. Used in this way, it becomes merely another form of exploitation, serving the purposes of outsiders who have their own agenda but who know they cannot gain a complete picture of the problems that interest them through conventional methods alone.

This is also a dilemma which faces practitioners who have tried to adopt participatory approaches in their work. Many of these efforts have ended in frustration because some, but not enough, control has been handed over to the subjects of the programme.²⁹ Surrendering power in this way is a painful process for academic and practitioner alike. It is very important, however, that we learn to differentiate between genuinely participatory approaches to research and development, and approaches that use participation as a means to achieve predetermined aims.

²⁷ See S Paul, *Community Participation in Development Projects: the World Bank experience*, Washington DC: World Bank Discussion Paper 6, 1987.

²⁸ See P Oakley and D Marsden, *Approaches to Participation in Rural Development*, Geneva: ILO, 1984.

²⁹ See R Kidd and M Byrne, *Popular Theatre and Non-Formal Education in Botswana: a critique of pseudo-participatory popular education* (mimeographed) Toronto: Theatre-For-Development Network, 1984.

Does all research have to be participatory?

Is all research that departs from the principles outlined above destined to be worthless? Obviously, the answer to this question is 'no'; there are many areas of work which by definition cannot be directly participatory. Into this category fall many aspects of lobbying, networking, and the exchange and dissemination of information, all of which are vital components of any development strategy that aims to promote change over a wider area or longer time-scale than the purely local or immediate. Very often, the factors that perpetuate underdevelopment lie beyond direct grassroots control, in the policies of governments and institutions which shape the political and economic frameworks within which people have to live and work. It is rarely possible for people in the village to influence these policies directly, and it is in this sense that 'higher-level' research or information work has a role to play. The important distinction to be made is that such higher-level work must grow out of and be based upon participatory research at lower levels.

Examples of this kind of contribution might include the works of Susan George and Cheryl Payer, neither of whom is involved directly in participatory research, but both of whom base their conclusions on the experiences and priorities of people at the grassroots. In so doing, they have been able to influence the policies of the World Bank and other institutions in a positive direction.³⁰ Agencies such as OXFAM try to use the experience of their partners overseas in much the same way, and the contribution of detailed historical and anthropological monographs, often based on oral testimony and life-history techniques, has also been important in helping to change the way in which we look at problems. As Cheryl Payer puts it, 'Armchair radicals like myself . . . can perhaps make a modest contribution to international solidarity by performing scholarly tasks for which the revolutionaries on the spot have no time and few resources.'³¹

In other words, there are situations in which we need a combination of higher- and lower-level observation; of the skills of the researcher and of the practitioner; and of the view from the 'centre' (the village and the 'periphery' (the researcher) taken together.³² John Clark of OXFAM once described two views of the same city, one from a helicopte

³⁰ See C Payer, *The World Bank: a critical analysis*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982; George, *Ill Fares The Land*.

³¹ C Payer, *The World Bank*, p 374. For an illustration of the value of the historical approach see L White, *Magomero: portrait of an African village*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

³² See R Chambers, 'Putting the Last First', p 46.

hovering overhead, and another from the streets below. Each gives a different view of what is going on: the view from above gives an overall impression of how the different parts of the city interact together, while the view from below describes the situation of the city's residents. Both are essential if we are to have an accurate picture of the city in all its aspects, but the view from above has to be constructed from the view from below. Hence, the title of this paper is really rather misleading. It should be 'The irrelevance of *some* development studies', or 'development studies of a particular form'. If the link with people's real concerns and experiences is sufficiently strong, then even 'high-level' research can be genuinely developmental.

Practical issues of a participatory approach

So far, I have argued for the adoption of a better approach to development studies rooted firmly in greater participation at local level. But what are the practical steps to be taken if such an approach is to succeed? Given the dead-weight imposed by generations of 'top-down' development and research, this is no easy task. 'The only way we are going to help Africa solve its problems is to help Africans to do their research programmes themselves.'³³ This is true, but exactly how do we help?

There are at least two prerequisites for successful participatory research: strong local organisations that are capable of carrying out research effectively, and continuous contact between the subjects of the research and the researcher.³⁴ This second condition is relatively easy to meet, given sufficient resources and the right attitudes on the part of the researcher, but the first condition is much more difficult. One consequence of decades of Northern domination over development studies is the lack of a strong capacity to undertake participatory research within the countries of the Third World. Research institutions in Zambia, for example, tend to be poor copies of their Northern originals. They are neither technically competent in the limited empirical sense, nor are they adept at developing alternative approaches. In addition, they have tended to adopt precisely the attitudes of elitism that have rendered so much Northern research irrelevant. So our first task should be to help in fostering a stronger local base for participatory approaches to development studies. This is already being done through organisations such as the African Participatory Research Network and the

³³ D Morgan, 'The crisis of research', *West Africa*, 14 October 1985, p 2158.

³⁴ See P Richards, *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution*.

African Association for Research and Development. It is up to academics and others in the North to support these initiatives, rather than compete with them. This requires a transfer of resources from North to South so that more emphasis is placed on local research, training and institution building. Rather than going overseas to be trained (often inappropriately), development workers should be trained at home, where they can be exposed to the reality of conditions at the grassroots and can enter into active partnership with the poor of their own countries. However, this is only feasible if Third World institutions are provided with the extra resources they need to ensure the right sort of support to their programmes.

Non-governmental organisations have a particular role to play here because they are often better versed in the skills and attitudes which are essential if the participatory approach is to be successful. Notwithstanding the great diversity within the NGO community (noted above), they are generally better at listening and learning than either government or multilateral agencies. However, they also have their limitations, especially those of size and scale. If new approaches to development studies are to be adopted nationally and internationally, then they must be spread throughout the structures with which poor people interact as part of their daily lives. In particular this applies to extension workers and other officials of government. So NGOs do have a crucial role to play in training government personnel to approach their work more effectively. As anyone who has worked with government staff will know, this is a task made particularly difficult by the rigid way in which most have been trained and have worked for so many years. Nevertheless, the experience of NGO programmes around the world shows that it can be done, given sufficient resources and commitment over the necessarily lengthy periods of time this process requires.³⁵ It is particularly important that Third World NGOs (rather than Northern or international ones) become stronger in performing these tasks.

Non-governmental organisations provide a particularly useful illustration of the need to bring research and action together, because traditionally they have not been very good at recording and exploring the lessons of their experience. As Edgar Stoesz has written, 'A serious gap in the myriads of volumes available is any serious attempt to relate theories to practice and address them to the practitioner in the field. It would seem that practitioners do not write, and theoreticians remain in

³⁵ In Zambia and Malawi, for example, new approaches to primary health care first developed by local NGOs are now being adopted by government. See A Klouda, *Primary Health Care*.

the abstraction of their theories.³⁶ This is hardly surprising, given the antagonism that has characterised relations between academics and practitioners for so long. Anyone who has worked in a field position for an NGO knows how difficult it is to find time to read, think and write. In addition, NGO personnel are not often trained to undertake participatory research themselves, and sometimes find it difficult to make sense of the complex relationships which exist at micro level between people and their environment. I return, then, to the need to bring research and action closer together through joint initiatives.

This is already happening on a limited scale—for example, in Mexico City, where an NGO named CENVI provides a forum through which residents of inner-city tenements and members of local universities can join together in a common search for solutions to the problems that confront them.³⁷ The results of this kind of collaboration cannot be other than beneficial to all parties. NGOs may provide an ideal intermediary through which this process can take place. Through them, researchers can gain a much closer understanding of what is happening at grass-roots level, while NGOs (and the people they serve) can learn from others with the time and training required to assess accurately the impact of development programmes in the field.

Conclusion

This article opened with a paradox: why is so much that is said, written and spent on development having so little effect on the problems it seeks to address? I have tried to search for an answer in a critique of the methodology used by conventional approaches to development studies. This methodology, I argued, renders much of our current output irrelevant. This is not because we act from ulterior motives but because our whole approach is wrong. Chief among the factors that contribute to this situation are the 'professionalisation' of development studies and the devaluation of popular knowledge; the values and attitudes of researchers and practitioners that prevent them from working as equals; the control of knowledge by elites; and a failure to unite understanding, action, relevance and participation. Taken together, these weaknesses make it very difficult for conventional development studies to have any significant effect on the problems they seek to address. In order to

³⁶ Quoted in R Bunch, *Two Ears of Corn*, p iii.

³⁷ See P Connolly, 'Cooperativa de vivienda y servicios habitacionales "Guerrero": lecciones del caso', *Boletín de Medio Ambiente y Urbanización* 5 (18), 1987, pp 81-4.

overcome this impasse, we need an alternative methodology. One such model, participatory or action research, was presented briefly, followed by a short analysis of some of the practical issues which need to be addressed if this model is to be successful. In an article of this length, it has only been possible to deal in generalities.

However, it is important to understand that participatory research is not a panacea for underdevelopment. It is, first and foremost, a methodology or an approach to problem-solving which, if used correctly, can form the basic building block of a successful development strategy. But it cannot, by itself, bring development, since development is a process of empowerment. Adopting a more appropriate framework for development studies can increase significantly our ability to interpret and influence the complex issues which face us. But it cannot make these issues disappear.

It is vital also that we recognise the constraints that will retard the adoption of participatory approaches to development, so that we are better able to deal with them when they arise. There are sure to be political constraints resulting from the association by governments of 'participation' with 'opposition', and there will be other constraints imposed by development practitioners' unwillingness to change an approach which has suited them for many years. Unless these constraints are recognised and participatory research is adapted to meet local needs and circumstances, there is a danger that it will become just as ineffective as the approach it seeks to replace. This is already happening in some universities which treat participatory research as just another subject for the timetable.

Most important of all, if participatory approaches to development studies are to take root, there needs to be a radical re-orientation in attitudes among the elites who currently control the field. We need consciously to adopt a position of humility with respect to our own limitations and those of 'our' kind of education and training. We must learn to appreciate the value of indigenous knowledge and to recognise the importance of popular participation in showing us what is relevant and what is not. In this way, we will begin to move from practice based on the philosophy of *knowledge*, to practice based on the philosophy of *wisdom*, to a form of enquiry in which what we do and what we are matter more than what we know.³⁸

Changes in this direction are going to be slow and difficult, largely because of the legacy bequeathed to us by training and experience—a

³⁸ See N Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom*.

legacy of status, wealth and power which results from the rule of the philosophy of knowledge, and the continued control of this knowledge by the few. Inevitably, those who seek to protect this monopoly will view participatory research as a threat. That is why profound changes in our attitudes toward other people are essential if new approaches are to be embraced. Lest we become unduly pessimistic, however, it is important to recognise that progress is already being made in many areas of development work.³⁹ What remains is to extend the influence of this early work to the broad mass of people involved in development, including, of course, those 80,000 expatriates at work south of the Sahara. Of these 'experts'; of the hundreds of thousands of words written about development; and of the billions of dollars spent in its name, how many are really part of the solution, and how many are actually part of the problem? To ask this question, and to consider it truthfully and with an open mind, can be the beginning of a journey of liberation, first for ourselves, and then for the world around us.

³⁹ See for example D Werner and B Bower, *Helping Health Workers Learn*, Palo Alto, California: Hesperian Foundation, 1982; R Bunch, *Two Ears of Corn*; A Hope, S Timmel and C Hodzi, *Training for Transformation*.

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SHORT STORY

The tenantry of birds *

Olive Senior

When she went on to the verandah after coming home she noticed immediately that the bird tree had no tenants. How strange. The bird tree used to be fully lived in all year round. The rather bedraggled tree at the bottom of the garden near the gully she had always thought of as a bird tree or tenantry. It seemed to have no year-round dwellers but a succession of temporary visitors who came regularly at the same time each year, claimed a branch for a while, then left again for another season. So busy was this tenantry that it reminded her of the game they played as children:

Room for rent
Apply within
When I run out
You run in.

But while lesser birds might come and go unnoticed, the star boarders were the pecharies, a pair that came each year and built their nest in the highest branches from which they could hurl themselves screaming, from time to time, on to the head of some luckless straying bird or even other tenants on the lower branches who dared to get too close. Particularly ferocious was their assault on the kling-klings, who flew along in untidy and noisy flocks from tree to tree before settling in amused disorder in one or even several of the adjacent trees. They reminded her of rude children at parties who refused to sit at table or be organised for games, who ate too much and were ungainly in habit and bearing and yet who always seemed to her so fortunate and carefree. The pecharies particularly disliked the kling-klings and reserved their most spiteful curses for them. The kling-klings—rough, uncouth, chattering and uncaring—merely shrugged them off and headed noisily for another tree. But the pecharies would continue to attack until the kling-klings were driven out of the garden.

She was fascinated by the tree, by the birds in the garden and the pecharies in particular, for their fierce protection of their young, their togetherness and most marvellous of all, for the way they gave their young ones lessons in flying and shrieking before pushing them out of the nest, tenderly hovering to catch them if they fell. But they never did.

Sometimes she became so engrossed in watching the antics of the birds that

* 'The tenantry of birds' is to appear in the collection, *Arrival of the Snake-Woman and other stories* by Olive Senior, published by Harlow, Essex: Longman (Longman Caribbean Writers Series), Summer 1989.

Philip would come out of the bedroom dressed and ready for class and find her there with a silly grin on her face and laugh at her foolishness, her sentimentality about the birds.

When they had bought the house, Philip had wanted to cut down the tree which he found unsightly, but she protested. For she had seen the nesting pecharies from the verandah from the very first day and the tree held a peculiar fascination for her. It was as if it were something from a more primitive, less contrived location than their garden, that had wandered into the wrong place and flourished there.

With the house came a beautifully kept garden and Philip ensured that it continued to be so. Not that he himself did any gardening but he was good at giving orders to Vinton the gardener about the straightness of the hedges, the greenness of the lawns, the trimming of trees and shrubs, and before going to work usually made a morning inspection of everything. Philip's idea of a garden was a showplace of straight lines, of symmetry, of everything exactly in its place. She hated the garden for these reasons and because it had precisely those plants which she most disliked, the same ones that had been in her mother's garden and the gardens of all the people she knew—hybrid crotons, poinsettia, gladioli, dahlias and gerberas, red roses, pink anthuriums, allamanda and ixoria. She would have preferred a wilder, more informal kind of garden with huge spreading trees and a riot of flowers in bloom all year round looking as if they grew naturally there, like her aunt's garden in the country. But in those days she had been afraid to argue with Philip, to venture an opinion, to suggest anything, and the garden which was smug and trim like the gardens of their affluent neighbours, stayed as it was.

Only the bird tree remained to mar its perfection (on sufferance, for Philip still threatened its death) but it was out of the way at the bottom of the garden, seen only from the upstairs verandah outside the bedrooms. It was a shabby tree; really it was two trees. There was a timber tree which she could not identify and growing against it to the point where it almost enveloped it was a leguminous bush of rampant growth. Perhaps the competition stimulated both for the strange tree combination got taller and taller, wilder and more unkempt as the branches tangled together: a perfect tenantry for the birds.

Early mornings she would get up and while Mirelle got the children ready for school and before she joined them for breakfast, she would sit out there by herself and watch the antics of the birds around. So she knew the minute the john chewitts arrived each year; when the loggerheads darted to grab the birc peppers; when the mockingbirds sang. Sometimes after Philip and the children left she would go back to the verandah, straining her eyes and ears to see and hear the birds. She knew that she was wasting time when she should be up and-doing, but she never did much of anything anyway. She found that her life now fell into a pattern of lethargy about everything, and watching the bird was the most satisfying, the most seductive part of her day, that put her i

touch with something pure and free, natural and unfettered, something that demanded nothing more than the delight of her senses.

Not that she knew much about birds. In fact all she knew was what she had learnt during the long-ago summers she had spent with her aunt and uncle in the country. There she would be overwhelmed by a houseful of disorderly cousins, some resident, some visiting like her, who could be as noisy and brash as the kling-klings, as swift and quarrelsome as the pecharies. But they all startled her with their knowledge: how to set traps for birds using flour and straw and how to play dolly pot and moonshine darling, how to set spells on lizards to get them to stand still for minutes at a time and to call out 'Green Bush. Green Bush. Green Bush' to make wasps go away. They frightened her with duppy stories at nights and could burst into songs which they all knew the words of—Jamaican folk songs at that, which her mother had forbidden her to sing because they were 'nigrish'.

In the daytime they wandered like a raucous flock all over the property and they knew the names of things and their uses: gully beans for stewing with saltfish, ecrassie for bellyache. Every tree had a name, every bird in the sky (how did they *know* such things?), even the ants had names and personalities: red ants pepper ants black ants mad ants and pity-me-little. What a world where there were so many things to discover, even things that frightened her, for when she was with her mother, nothing was allowed to frighten her. How could these children know so much? And she so little! She was so ashamed of her ignorance. 'You don't know *anything*!' they cried day after day. They had to show her how to clean the lampshades with newspaper and trim the wicks, how to operate the bucket which got water from the tank, how to know by looking at the clouds whether there would be rain or fair weather, how to tell when soursop was ripe or pear about to drop from the tree. How to play hide-and-seek and really find a good hiding place when she was 'it'. How to make up and tell wonderful stories. How to be brave. And their games! Gigs they made themselves which spun, bright kites they glued together which actually flew, tough boys' games like 'Bull inna pen' in which she was always trampled, soft girls' games like 'Brown girl in the ring' and 'Jane and Louisa'.

Every year she felt ashamed to go to them with so little. And they had so much. She did have her beautiful clothes and shoes, her long plaits and bright ribbons and hair clips, her ring that her father had given her for her tenth birthday that had a real diamond, a fine watch that didn't need winding, and lots and lots of toys including a carousel that played a tune when you wound it with horses and riders that went round and round. These things made her a hit with the cousins who eagerly awaited her coming so they could try on her beautiful clothes, wear her ring and admire her earrings in her newly pierced ears, and wind the carousel till it broke.

Despite their attentions she had the vague knowledge that they liked her not so much for herself as for the things that her parents had given her. Beside her

cousins who were allowed to run wild and free, to shout, to quarrel and shriek, to laugh and sing—at least during the school holidays—she felt herself restricted, as if she were not a person in herself but a creation, an extension of her mother who even though she was not there was nevertheless a presence which she could not shake off long enough to express herself, to be. But she did not know what being herself meant, whether or not it wasn't simply a condition of making oneself liked by other people at whatever cost. So while the girl cousins played with her toys so much that she herself had no chance to even touch them, the boy cousins did dreadful things like hanging her dolls from trees and threatening to hang her too while she timidly smiled at them, her heart beating all the while. But smiling helped. She always smiled at everyone, even when she was frightened.

She loved best those late afternoons when her uncle would most courteously invite her for a walk. The other children snickered for they thought the uncle terribly old and boring. But she was too polite to refuse the first time he asked and after that, walking with her uncle became the highpoint of the holidays. The two of them would set off down the winding country road and he would greet each passerby as if he intimately knew them all. Best of all she liked it when he talked about the world they were passing through, noted the birds, told her their names and imitated their calls. With him she felt not frightened and threatened as she felt with the cousins but expansive as if her life was broadening, reaching out to touch the universe itself.

Sometimes he took her into the Chinese shop in the village square. He would seat her on top of a stack of full sugar bags near one end of the counter where she could see everything and drink a warm and sticky cream soda from the bottle (oh bliss!). He would have a drink with the men who congregated at one end of the grocery counter which was tacitly understood to be the men's place. While he was chatting she had a chance to look around the shop, to absorb the sights, the smells, the way Mr Chin even while talking would dip up a little scoop of salt, flour or whatever and pour it onto a square of brown paper, deftly folding the paper into a cone ready for his customers who could afford to buy things only in small amounts.

She pecked into the barrels of salt herring and mackerel, loving their pungent smell which was totally foreign to her for such things were never eaten at home except by the maids and yard boys. At first she was scared of the shop, of the country people coming in and out, especially the women who wore pinafores which always smelled of the jackass rope which they carried in their pockets and smoked in their clay pipes and she was embarrassed at first by the way everyone loudly admired her, exclaimed over her while the uncle proudly introduced her as his pretty little Kingston niece.

Whenever she went to the shop she became for a while the centre of everyone's good-humoured attention. At first she shrank away from these people surrounding her, for they were shoeless and coarse and black, and her mother

was always warning her never to have anything to do with black people. But after a while she began to feel at ease in the warmth of the shop, in the way everybody knew everybody else and joked and chattered and hailed each other loudly. Under their attentions, their kindness which more and more extended to bits of sugar cane and paradise plum, mint balls and icy mints from Mr Chin's glass jars and (from Mr Chin himself) sweet-sour Chinese sweets, she began to glow, to show off even, to chatter to them the way she never did to anyone else, to allow them to admire her earrings, her watch and her ring, her patent leather shoes with the straps, her skirt with the permanent pleats, feel her long curls, tie and untie her ribbons.

In the shop she felt happy as if there was nobody looking over her shoulder to see what she was doing. She knew that she would never tell her mother about the visits to Mr Chin's shop, for her mother said such places were dirty and smelly and overcharged because all Chinese were thieves, and her mother shopped only in the big supermarket with the shiny floors and silvery shopping carts where only people like herself shopped.

Every time she returned home, her mother got angry about a lot of things and said that it was the last time she would send her to the country for her sister took no care of her, look at her hair it was just like cane trash and full of knots and look at all the scratches and scabs on her knees and elbows and she hadn't cleaned out her ears once and had lost one foot off her good black patent leather shoes and had come back with nothing but mismatched socks, half of them didn't belong to her and was talking badly just like those country children. She was tired of correcting her and worst of all her skin was burnt black and it would take weeks and weeks to get her complexion fair and clear again.

Every year her mother threatened that she wouldn't send her back to the country. But the threat was never carried out, until one year when school ended, she announced that she was too big now to be going to the country and running wild and she would be taking her to Miami. After that she always spent her holidays in the States, sometimes with her mother but mostly on her own with her mother's relatives and friends in New York, Hartford, Houston, Los Angeles. Her mother always told them on the phone that she wanted Nolene to get some culture and she had her rounds of the movies, amusement parks and zoos. More and more her mother herself kept going to Miami, first on her endless buying trips, and then as she looked down the road and pronounced the island of her birth one with no future, she persuaded her husband to buy them a condo there. When Nolene left school it was inevitable that her mother would get her into a junior college in Miami where all the nice people's children went though it was costing them an arm and a leg to keep her there (her mother said). Nolene went through college the way she had gone through everything else, as in a dream, dutifully doing what her mother, her teachers told her, smiling always as in a dream, feeling that she had not yet entered into life, but was waiting.

Sitting in an office in Miami, playing at public relations, she continued to mark time, to be beautiful and sweet and good and not give her mother cause to be angry or disappointed in her. For she expressed her feelings in a shrill loud way that was frightening to Nolene since it contrasted so sharply with the genteel, ladylike tones her mother usually adopted otherwise.

When she met Philip she knew that this was what she had been waiting for. Of course the marriage, the meeting even, had all been arranged by her mother, for he was the son of a dear friend now living in Hartford. A fine young man, an economist with a PhD and prospects of becoming a university professor though she didn't like the idea of his going back to Jamaica to work, things were not looking so good down there and everybody knew that the university was a hotbed of communists. But they got married and went back (it was not so easy to get a university teaching job in the States) and Nolene's parents bought them the house as a wedding present.

Nolene was upset (though she didn't show it) that her mother was so insistent that the title should be in her name only. She was embarrassed but Philip laughed and shrugged it off. But it was just like her mother to spoil everything, to embarrass her with her coarseness, her loudness, her insistence on her 'rights' to the exclusion of everything else. Mother loved money, possessions, and was always giving Nolene lectures about how a woman should behave. Nolene knew that all the real estate they were acquiring in Miami was in her mother's name; her father didn't seem to care; he didn't seem to care about anything these days but getting out of the house and more and more spending his time at the Race Track. You see, her mother kept on saying, that's why you have to make sure that everything is in your name; you can't trust men not to throw it away overnight on the horses or kick you out for another woman. But, Nolene thought, these things are immaterial if you have love; she loved Philip so much she would have given him *everything*, only she realised she had nothing really to give.

At first it all went well. Philip was teaching at the university. The pay was poor but her mother helped them out from time to time with elaborate gifts and money regularly after the children arrived. Because they lived off the campus she hardly knew Philip's colleagues and having little to say, did not feel at home with those she did meet, since all they seemed to do was talk and argue. More and more her world became that of home and children, for after Tracey-Ann was born Philip refused to let her work again. A mother's place, he said, is at home with her young children and she wondered how he could claim to be so 'progressive' yet be so old-fashioned about these things. She did not want to stay home, she liked going out to work, she liked getting up in the mornings and getting dressed, driving in rush hour traffic, functioning at a job, for these things made her feel good about herself, capable and wanted, in touch with a vibrant world of her own out there. But she stayed at home as Philip wanted because she knew that this was what would please him best.

But things, the country, started to change around them; they installed burglar bars on all the windows (paid for by her mother), and now she drove with her car windows up all the time. The women who phoned each other now talked of nothing but shortages in the supermarket and the latest horrors of who had been raped last night. And the trickle to Miami turned into a flood.

Everyone was caught up in politics. Philip too. He had begun to make a name for himself off campus by writing articles for the Sunday papers analysing the economy and people started to sit up and take notice. He was one of the few university men who bothered to get off the campus and out into the community, they said, and what is more, he was not scruffy like the rest of them in their beards and sandals. He had leftist leanings, it is true, but was no communist agitator, and the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycees and even the Soroptimists felt safe enough to invite him to address them. More than that, the businessmen were beginning to overcome their distrust of the university, of men of learning, and were embracing those who called themselves consultants, as Philip came to be. This, along with what Nolene's mother sent, helped to pay for the Volvo which he had just acquired, for his PC, the video, the badminton court and an apartment on the north coast. He was also beginning to get a rush from the politicians, both parties recognising that any specialist in international monetary studies was one of the bright boys to watch.

But Philip could see where the wind was blowing and threw in his lot with the PNP, and when that party came to power in their massive landslide victory, he was one of the three or four bright university types who became the Prime Minister's chief advisers.

Life changed for them then; she saw less and less of him; sometimes he didn't come home for days at a time or else their house was turned into an extension of Jamaica House, with people coming and going at all hours while they worked on the Plan. She never knew what Plan, if it was one that kept changing, or many. All she knew was that this was the time that Philip began to openly express his dissatisfaction with her—he kept urging her to do something, get committed, get involved in the work of the Party, in the women's movement. And though she dutifully tried, she was put off by these brilliant women suddenly out there who were talking their heads off, talking to the platforms, chopping off their hair into low Afros or wearing head wraps, making strident and positive noises.

Most of all she was frightened by Philip's PA—his personal assistant. All the clever young men had one in those days—young women who were bright, efficient, bursting with commitment and politically unimpeachable. Philip's PA was Jennifer, a short, stout, very black girl whose Afro hair style made her look mannish, but who had the most devastating smile and apparently a limitless fund of energy since she was on call twenty-four hours a day. Jennifer drank and smoked and swore, was loud and argumentative and could hold her

own with the best of the men, the kind of woman Nolene had been taught to dislike, the kind of woman who in the early days of their marriage Philip had expressed contempt for. Now whenever Jennifer or any of the party women came to the house she locked herself into her bedroom and sat on the verandah watching the birds. The men were more bearable, they were men after all and she was an attractive woman; it was the women who scared her, made her feel inept and silly. Nowadays, especially, she knew they were particularly critical of women like her, women who still wore their nails long and polished, who still went dressed up to the supermarket, creamed their hair and refused to wrap their heads, women who worried about irrelevances like cornflakes and toys. It was not that she was being defiant in running against the tide, it was simply that it was easier for her to continue to be the kind of person her mother had brought her up to be, than to go with the new popular style.

Philip for all his involvement with the party also had his eyes down the road and it was he who decided that, for safety's sake, she and the children should go to live abroad. She didn't want to leave him, hated Miami and dreaded being again under her mother's thumb. But what weapons did she have to fight with? She ended up going.

The news from home got worse and worse and she worried about Philip but she saw him often, if only for the brief stopover he contrived through Miami on his many official trips abroad. Before he arrived he usually called her with a long shopping list of things which he needed and couldn't get at home. He always went home laden with bags of detergent, rice, car parts, whisky, as did everyone else. At first she didn't mind shopping for Philip—with her money. She knew he had no foreign exchange and felt proud after all these years to be contributing something. She didn't mind at first when he called asking her to send him money at some stop along the way. But his demands got more and more frequent for larger and larger sums and she found that the time came when all her savings were depleted and she was trying harder and harder to make ends meet. More and more she began to resent the fact that she was being taken for granted, for the minute he had put her on a plane for Miami he had absolved himself of all responsibility for her and the children. After all it was impossible to get money out of Jamaica and in any case the situation was only temporary; so he didn't know how she schooled and fed the children and paid the rent. But it was now two years and he had used up all her money.

All of these thoughts remained unspoken even when her financial situation became so critical she began to live on loans. But she never really got angry until she discovered that a great deal of what she bought for her husband was in fact intended for his friends and political colleagues, and the money she sent to different parts of the world was sometimes for others. Though she had never lost her temper in her life, it made her unbearably angry when he phoned and asked her to buy two car tyres that she knew were not his car size and turned so waspish when she told him she did not have the money to do so. He

was shouting over the phone that she was embarrassing him in front of his friends since he had assured them that he could get the tyres and if she couldn't pick up one or two things for him in Miami from time to time, what good was she? She in turn had got angry, for the first time in their married life had dared to differ, and he was speechless on the long distance line as she poured out her grievances, her anxieties, all that had been bottled up these years: her loneliness, her fears of what the children were learning in Miami, how she could no longer control them, they no longer listened to her, how he put his friends, his political career before their welfare. But by that time he had stopped listening. Appalled at what she had done she tried to call him back but his line rang for a day and a night without answer and when she got his office his PA—the same one, Jennifer—claimed that he was away on 'retreat' and she would have him call her sometime. Sometime? How dare she? How dare this woman tell her such a thing. About her husband. How dare he go off without leaving a number where he could be reached. Suppose there was an emergency with one of the children? She cried herself to sleep. But she woke up feeling not saddened, but defiant, as if she had already crossed a bridge when she had argued with Philip and had to continue down that road.

Lying in bed she thought for the first time in years of the bird tree, of the foolish kling-klings and the faithful domesticated pecharies, of the concerts by the mockingbirds and the sweet calls of the john chewitts in April, felt an unbearable longing to go home, to see her husband, to talk to him, to tell him that she couldn't live in a place without real trees, without birds, that she didn't want her children to grow up not knowing how to cast spells on lizards so they'd stand still, make fee-fes out of flowers and know cerassic bush for bellyache. And the thought of the pecharies inspired her: why couldn't she be a pechary and defend her territory, chase out the foolish kling-klings—like Jennifer. Just like that, she decided to go home. Doing each thing she had never dared to do before gave her a new elation as if she were discovering a world out there where all things had names and everything had a purpose and she was not so ignorant and foolish after all.

She bought a ticket without telling anyone, not even her mother, in fact lied to her mother, telling her that Philip had asked her to come home for a few days. Her mother took the children and she got on a plane; she decided not to tell Philip she was coming; she would take a taxi in from the airport and surprise him.

But when she got home—strange to call it that—no one was there except a new helper who looked at her wildly when she announced who she was. She couldn't understand why the woman's eyes bulged as if she were seeing a duppy. As she walked into the house, the helper moved as if to block her way but she ignored the woman and noted with some surprise that the living room furniture had been completely rearranged and there were fresh flowers all around. In the master bedroom she threw open the French windows that led

to the verandah and went out to take a deep breath of the fresh air, her eyes immediately falling on the bird tree. And though she listened and strained her eyes she could see no sign of birds. But not for long. Soon the garden was filled with the unmistakably raucous sounds of the kling-klings and when the flock crossed into the garden and settled in the topmost branches of the tree, she knew that it was not pechary season. She watched the kling-klings for a while and then turned inside. As her eyes became accustomed to the darkened room she noted the easy chair in the corner on which reposed a woman's slip, neatly folded. And as she took in carefully the rest of the room, she saw women's clothes in the closet that were not hers, perfume bottles on her dressing table, someone else's underwear in her chest of drawers, someone else's jewellery, someone's scent.

The frightened helper who had been watching her from the doorway now fled as if she were to be personally held responsible for the disaster about to overtake the house. She must have telephoned Philip for he arrived soon after and showed no surprise to see her and—she was glad of it—made no attempt to dissemble. He came straight to the point at once though she thought that for a university lecturer he was unbearably rambling thereafter:

Nolene I am sorry that I did not tell you. You had to come and find out, but if you had told me you were coming I would have met you. What did you expect me to do? You went off to Miami and left me here alone a man of flesh and blood. Never interested in my work the party comrades Jennifer.

Jennifer? Nolene till that moment was barely listening to what he was saying, her mind too numb to really take it in. But Jennifer? A kling-kling? She giggled hysterically.

Well, you know we have been working closely together. You and I never had anything in common really. You never tried. Just like your mother all you are interested in is acquiring things . . . status . . . money . . . materialism . . . class interest . . . bourgeoisie.

She was now only hearing fragments of this talk. Oh God, she thought. She never knew it would be like this. She thought he would at least have had something to say to her, about their marriage, about being sorry, about asking her to forgive him, but he was talking about:

Jennifer . . . the society . . . struggle and I feel the best thing would be for you to go back to Miami as soon as possible. Now that you know I'll file for divorce. Jack will handle it. Desertion, no problem. It's almost three years. I know you won't want to contest it. You can have the children. I won't contest that either. I know you will never come back to Jamaica to live. Commitment . . . struggle. If you give me your ticket I will get you on the first plane out tomorrow. I know it's a shock but it's probably best that you find out like this so I don't have to spell anything out for you.

She didn't know when he left after giving up trying to get her to speak to him

and she didn't know what time she fell asleep, in the children's room. At least no one had taken that over. It was the same as they had left it, with their tattered books, their old toys, their crayon drawings on the walls. Her last thoughts before she fell asleep in a small bed was that it made her sad to see the remnants of what they had been for they had grown so much in the last two years, beyond her, beyond their years. Now they would never know about the birds or the names of bushes and trees and what to cry to keep wasps away. For when she left in the morning she would never have any reason to come back to Jamaica.

Next morning she still felt confused and bewildered and Philip was nowhere to be seen; she didn't know if he had even spent the night there. She woke at dawn and did what she had always done, went out on to the verandah. And, as if they had been waiting for her, she was immediately treated to a concert by the mockingbirds; three of them that took it in turns to sing their rapture from an electric light pole, treetop and verandah railing. The mockingbirds always amused her, straining with their small bodies for notes almost beyond their grasp, such complicated songs of rapture, pouring out sound after sound. Standing on the verandah she listened, startled, confused, having forgotten what it was like to hear mockingbirds in the morning.

The mockingbirds awakened something in her that harkened back to her childhood, to the time with the country cousins when she had first had a sense of being nobody, and an anger started to build up inside her, anger at her mother who had claimed her life as her own and shifted her around and then handed her over to another, at Philip who had taken her over, who had shifted her around and was now handing her back to her mother. And who was she now? And had she ever been anyone? And who were they to determine her life so? Even the birds—the pecharies, the kling-kings, the mockingbirds—knew clearly who they were, had established their own territory, their own hierarchy, their own notions of family life.

And this house of humans now was no better than the bird tree for Philip had turned it into a tenantry—one bird out, another in.

She sat there thinking for a long long time, getting angrier and angrier, her very anger hardening her, dragging her away from the tree, from the birds, forcing her to focus on her very self. *This* woman sitting alone on *this* verandah now. And finally she came to her decision. She thought, to hell with it! She would throw out the crotons and the anthuriums, the gerberas and the ixorias. She would plant a new garden. First, she would find the gardener and tell him never to touch the bird tree. It was *her* tree and *her* house and she was staying. *He* could move out.

Just to make sure she cried: 'Green Bush. Green Bush. Green Bush.' Laughing at the craziness of it. The power.

LITERARY PROFILE

On culture and the state: the writings of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Simon Gikandi

The journey that has taken the Kenyan writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, from his ancestral home in the tranquil ridges of Limuru, to exile in the brownstones of London, contains valuable lessons about the state of culture and politics in Africa today. For like many African writers, Ngũgĩ's literary career has been shaped both by his attempts to come to terms with the historical moment, in this case the nature of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa, and by his often bitter and passionate struggle with the Kenyan state. Indeed, one of the greatest ironies of Ngũgĩ's transformation from being his nation's most famous writer to its most feared political dissident is that there was a time when his writings articulated the same ideological message as that of his country's leaders. A review of Ngũgĩ's literary career is a mapping of the diverse and complex ways which nationalism in Africa has taken since the 1930s, for this novelist's life and his literary products have been closely shaped by the politics of nationalism, its initial promise and eventual failure.

If Ngũgĩ, more than any other African writer, seems to be haunted by his past, it is because he was born and grew up in the most turbulent period of Kenya's history. He was born in Limuru in 1938, at the end of a decade that had witnessed a renewed African challenge to colonialism, its culture and state. Throughout this decade of change and transition, Limuru, like many other villages and towns in Central Kenya, had been involved in a conflict over 'female circumcision' between Gikuyu traditionalists and European missionaries. Those Gikuyu Christians who supported this practice had subsequently broken away from established Christian missions and set up independent churches and schools. Although Ngũgĩ was born when the conflict was abating, he must have been aware of the social tensions it had created in the Gikuyu cultural body when he was growing up in the 1940s.

From about 1946 to 1958, Ngũgĩ went to primary school and first encountered the social and cultural divisions that were later to become key themes in his works. For what appeared on the surface to be a conflict of cultures (between Christian missionaries and Gikuyu nationalists) reflected a deeper class and race conflict in colonial Kenya. At the centre of this conflict was the issue of land, in particular the displacement of Gikuyu peasants from their native lands to give way to white settler farming. For the Gikuyu people to lose their lands, to be displaced from the soil, was to be alienated from the very essence of life itself. This point had been made poignantly by Jomo

Kenyatta (who was later to become the first president of Kenya) in his book, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), an incisive study of the political economy of Gikuyu culture which, in later years, was to have some major influence on Ngũgĩ. But for Ngũgĩ and his family, displacement was not an abstract issue: they had no land to call their own; rather, they lived as squatters on someone else's land; they were what the Gikuyu call *ahoi*, a word which connotes absolute dispossession.

But if the colonial appropriation of land in Kenya had created the consciousness of dispossession that was to haunt Ngũgĩ in his childhood and adult life, his going to school in 1946 provided the possibility of succeeding in the new colonial culture. There was, however, a problem in this transition from Gikuyu peasant life to the new value system of the colonial school: how could the 'new' African reconcile his two worlds? Ngũgĩ's early education seems to have been geared, unconsciously I believe, towards reconciling the two cultures: his early education was split between a mission school and a *Gikuyu Karing'a*, an independent school set up by the Christians who had broken away from the mainstream missions over the 'female circumcision' controversy. But Ngũgĩ entered the realm of colonial culture more decisively in 1954, when he was admitted to Alliance High School, the most prestigious secondary school in the country, an institution which had already been shaping the bodies and minds of the new African elite for several decades.

And yet, even as Alliance tried to instil English public school values in its African students, Kenya was in a state of political turmoil. Political agitation had reached its peak after the end of the Second World War, fuelled by African soldiers who had returned from defending the British empire in such remote and mythical places as Burma and Palestine only to discover that their hunger for land and economic advancement was stymied by the class and race policies of the colonial government. By the early 1950s, some of these soldiers and dispossessed peasants had begun to organise militarily in the forest. What came to be known popularly as the 'Mau Mau' rebellion, of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, broke out in 1952, prompting the colonial government to declare a state of emergency in Kenya. So, while Alliance may have tried to shelter Ngũgĩ from what came to be known locally as *hingo ya thiina* (the time of the troubles), Mau Mau was a historical reality from which he could not escape. His own family was involved in the movement, and Ngũgĩ remembers seeing his brother escape into the forest under a hail of bullets from colonial government forces.

Ngũgĩ completed his secondary education at Alliance in 1958, and in the following year he was admitted into an equally prestigious institution—Makerere University College in Uganda. The importance of Makerere in his writing career can be traced in several areas: as a student of 'English', Ngũgĩ was being educated in a discipline which had become the embodiment of the English cultural tradition, of which the new Africans were considered to be

natural heirs. But at the same time, there was a marked contrast between this English culture and the real condition of African peoples, who were economically deprived, culturally repressed, and politically voiceless. An awareness of the chasm between the promise of colonial culture and the realities of the colonial situation is what brought nationalism to Ngũgĩ and other members of the African elite; it is without doubt what motivated his early works.

It was at Makerere that Ngũgĩ became a writer, determined to use fiction to mediate his situation as a colonised man, and to come to terms with his own cultural displacement. The major factors of Ngũgĩ's life, between his birth in 1938 and his departure from Makerere in 1964, are important thematic and ideological concerns in his early works. In some of his juvenilia—especially the short stories which were later collected in *Secret Lives* (1975)¹—Ngũgĩ was concerned with 'the spirit of things' embodied both in the central doctrines of Gikuyu culture and in its mythology. Many readers have commented on what appears to be the author's romantic rendering of the relationship between the people and their land in these stories, but they can also be seen as Ngũgĩ's quest for a fictional supplement to compensate for his own family's bitter dispossession. Born in a family without ancestral land, Ngũgĩ began to write to overcome this lack; the central quest in the juvenilia is for reconnection with the soil, and hence the ancestral spirit which, in his people's culture, is embodied by the land.

Ngũgĩ's romantic quest for connections was also an inevitable response to the historical conflict in Kenya. In 1962, he was already expressing his anxieties about the rifts and conflicts that were threatening to tear Kenya apart as the country made its transition from the state of emergency to self-government. While Ngũgĩ would later adopt Mau Mau as a paradigm of revolutionary struggle, at the beginning of his career in the early 1960s the movement and the policies of the colonial state were associated with the destruction of individual and communal relationships. For the young author, culture, it seemed, would provide a means of overcoming such historically-engendered rifts and conflicts.

Indeed, in *Weep Not, Child* (1964),² the work that brought Ngũgĩ international prominence, the author presented an almost lyrical narrative on the ambiguity of the colonial situation. The theme itself—that of a child of two worlds caught between the claims of two diverse ideological systems—was emerging as a central one in African literature. Ngũgĩ's autobiographical character, Njoroge, is placed between the competing claims of nationalism and colonialism at the height of the Mau Mau war; unable to choose sides, he tries to transcend the conflicts of a history which he can understand only after the fact. In *Weep Not, Child*, Njoroge's transition from a situation of union with nature and community to a tragic victim of the war in Kenya, mirrors the

¹ *Secret Lives*, London: Heinemann, 1975.

² *Weep Not, Child*, London: Heinemann, 1964.

larger historical conflict between nationalists, collaborators and European settlers. The hero's bafflement at the unpredictable nature of change, reflects the ambivalence in Ngũgĩ's fictional rendering of historical movements.

In another of his early works, *The Black Hermit* (1968),³ a play written in 1962 for Uganda's independence celebrations, Ngũgĩ had placed in the foreground the dilemma history poses to the 'new' African: on one hand what society wants is a break with the past; yet this society cannot, in spite of its desire for transcendence, effect a decisive epistemological shift. So the question which Ngũgĩ was posing to himself as his career began to mature, just as nationalism in Kenya was moving towards its fulfilment, was simple: what was his situation as a writer, and what did it mean to be an African at this crucial junction of transition from colonialism to post-colonialism? As if to acknowledge that these questions were not as simple as they would appear to be, Ngũgĩ found himself returning to the past to seek answers to the present. In his second novel, *The River Between* (1965),⁴ whose manuscript had been completed a few years earlier, Ngũgĩ returned to the cultural conflict of the 1930s, not only to re-examine the debates about 'female circumcision', but also to seek the conditions that might make possible the establishment of a new value system.

The river that divides the two communities in this novel signifies two contesting ideological positions: on one side are the Christians who have invested their beliefs in the efficacy of the colonial system; on the other side are those traditionalists who believe that to accept the colonial ideology as natural and inevitable is to commit national suicide. The enormity of the choices to be made is dramatised in the familial conflict within Joshua's family: although he is a fervent believer in the Christian ideology and its uncompromising position on the 'female circumcision' issue, his younger daughter, Muthoni, will defy him to undergo the ritual, and hence 'marry the rituals of the tribe' with those of Christianity. In a community which has become polarised by this struggle over the meaning of culture and tradition, Ngũgĩ's hero, Waiyaki, seeks a middle position between colonial modernity and African traditionalism; he raises the possibility that the central doctrines of Western culture can be Africanised. Indeed, Africanisation had become a key cultural code at the dawn of independence.

And yet, Africanisation as a central doctrine for rationalising independence in Kenya was, to say the least, problematic: while Ngũgĩ, like other members of the African elite, had been trained to carry out the functions of the colonial state, and hence to fulfil the colonial mandate to 'modernise' or 'civilise' Africa, independence had put that colonial mission into doubt. If in 1962, Ngũgĩ was confidently suggesting that the fissures in the Kenyan body politic could be healed by a return to the central liberal doctrine of individualism, by 1967

³ *The Black Hermit*, London: Heinemann, 1968.

⁴ *The River Between*, London: Heinemann, 1965.

such a claim would appear facile, and the quest for new modes of knowledge had begun. Ironically, it was Ngũgĩ's departure and sojourn in England that was to precipitate his rejection of the key tenets of colonialism, namely individualism and capitalism.

When Ngũgĩ arrived at the University of Leeds in 1964 to undertake post-graduate studies under a British Council fellowship, the New Left Movement was in its birth throes, and the influence of the socialist movement in English universities was beginning to be felt strongly. Ngũgĩ's involvement with radical students and lecturers at Leeds forced him to question his earlier notions of politics, history, and culture. But there were two other influences which need to be stressed: Ngũgĩ's classmates at Leeds included some of the most perceptive students of African culture at the time, people like Peter Nazareth, Grant Kamenju, Imme Ikiddeh, and Pio Zirimu; a community of scholars already engaged in the process of Africanising knowledge. There was also Ngũgĩ's discovery of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), a diagnostic and prophetic study of the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism in Africa. In his reading of Fanon, among other things, Ngũgĩ began to focus the meaning of the African experience around two concerns: the failure of independence in Africa to initiate a decisive break with the past (what Fanon called the 'pitfalls of national consciousness'), and the centrality of national culture in the critical effort to stem this pitfall.

In 1967, Ngũgĩ published *A Grain of Wheat*,⁵ a novel in which he portrayed the movement toward independence as one in which history returned like the Hegelian repressed to haunt those who had made it: on the eve of independence, a group of villagers gather to celebrate what has been posited as a radical shift from the colonial past, only to see the day become one of painful judgments in which their past actions are measured against their present claims. In the figure of Mugo, the anti-hero of the novel, who is celebrated by the villagers as a hero although he is the one who betrayed Kihika, a leader in the revolutionary struggle, Ngũgĩ showed the ways in which meanings are confused in the quest for ideological certainty. Through the use of an ironic structure in which the meaning of action is rarely what it appears to be, and things often mean the opposite of what is asserted, Ngũgĩ casts doubts on the positive claims of history and change. At the end of the novel, on the long awaited day of independence, the foul weather becomes a symbol of fear and dampened aspirations.

It is not that Ngũgĩ was opposed to the promise of independence itself; rather, like many of his contemporaries, he was beginning to suspect that for the African ruling class, independence was not the epistemological shift promised at the height of nationalism; it seemed to entail the Africanisation of the colonial economy, its ideology, and its state apparatus. For Ngũgĩ, the period between 1967 and the publication of *Petals of Blood*⁶ in 1977 was one of

⁵ *A Grain of Wheat*, London: Heinemann, 1967.

⁶ *Petals of Blood*, London: Heinemann, 1977.

doubt and uncertainty, and a struggle with the inescapable question of power and knowledge in post-colonial Africa. Ngũgĩ's doubts were manifested most vividly in his tense relationship with the state in Kenya.

Although Ngũgĩ had returned to Nairobi in 1968 as a special lecturer in English at the University of Nairobi, he resigned a year later to protest against the government's actions regarding the political opposition, and its decision to close the university to curtail student dissent. For the next two years, Ngũgĩ was a literary wanderer: a writer in residence at Makerere University in Uganda (1971), and a visiting professor at Northwestern University in the USA (1971). He rejoined the University of Nairobi at the end of 1971 to continue an increasingly uncompromising discourse on the question of culture and the state in Kenya.

Ngũgĩ's responses to questions of power and culture permeate most of the essays collected in *Homecoming* (1972)⁷ and *Writers in Politics* (1981)⁸ as well as his pedagogical activities at the University of Nairobi. One of his central concerns became the possibility of Africanising culture: since African politicians had failed to effect any radical change in the structures of colonialism, he felt, it was the duty of the artist to restore the African character to history. With Taban Lo Liyong and Owour-Anyumba, Ngũgĩ had advocated the abolition of the English department at the University of Nairobi in an attempt to dislodge the English tradition from its privileged pedestal in independent Kenya. He had written about the urgency of making African culture the centre of African systems of knowledge, and on the significance of rescuing African history from colonial historiography. None of these things endeared him to the political and cultural establishment in Kenya.

In 1977, after a hiatus of ten years, Ngũgĩ presented an epic and dramatic rendering of these issues in *Petals of Blood*. Cast in the structure of a detective story in which a police officer investigates the murder of three powerful members of the political and economic elite, this novel becomes instead an exploration of the pitfalls of national consciousness in Kenya. Most of the action is reflected through the consciousness of several characters: of Munira who cannot make decisive choices; of Abdulla, an old revolutionary who carries the scars of betrayal on his body; of Wanja, the prostitute who embodies the fears and hopes of Kenyan women and their victimisation by the powerful; and Karega, the young union organiser who wants to understand his past so that he can reject his present.

As each of these characters is investigated as a possible suspect in the murder, Ngũgĩ takes the reader through the three major phases of African history: a pre-colonial past in which African communities struggle with nature to forge their distinct civilisations; the period of conquest in which foreign

⁷ *Homecoming: essays on African and Caribbean literature, culture and politics*, London: Heinemann, 1972.

⁸ *Writers in Politics*, London: Heinemann, 1981.

powers disrupt these communities; the state of neo-colonialism in which foreign control of the economy and culture has been entrenched despite independence. Ngũgĩ's dramatisation of these historical phases takes place against a backcloth of ominous contemporary events in Kenya: the destruction of democratic forces in 1969 and after, the assassination of J M Kariuki, a populist politician whose death in 1975 left the whole country in shock, and the internal struggle to succeed Kenyatta. *Petals of Blood* hence struck a very responsive chord in Kenya.

By 1977, however, Ngũgĩ had begun to confront two central contradictions in his own cultural practice: for one, he was realising that as a revolutionary writer, one committed to evoking a discourse of resistance, he could operate only within those parameters defined by the state; two, he was beginning to realise that his rhetoric of resistance signified the distance between his enunciation and its intended audience; most of the people whose experiences he wrote about were not literate in English, the language in which he wrote. Both points were confirmed in 1976 and 1977 when Ngũgĩ ventured into the arena of popular theatre. He discovered, for example, that *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976),⁹ a play he had co-authored with Micere Githae-Mugo as Kenya's contribution to the Festac festival in Lagos, had its performances curtailed at the Kenya National Theatre to give room to some production by British expatriates in Kenya. A few months later, when Ngũgĩ took his cultural activities a stage further with his new play, *Ngaahika Ndenda* (1977), co-authored with Ngũgĩ wa Mirii, written in Gikuyu and presented by peasants in the village of Kamirithu, the state's antipathy toward culture and cultural activism became obvious.

Both *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *Ngaahika Ndenda* (published in translation as *I Will Marry When I Want*)¹⁰ have nothing to recommend them as aesthetic products, for Ngũgĩ has never been a master of the dramatic form; neither is there anything memorable about their ideology. Both plays had treated themes already exhausted in Ngũgĩ's earlier works with tiresome reductionism. And yet, *Ngaahika Ndenda* was to add a totally new dimension to Ngũgĩ's notions of literary engagement. For a play touching on Kenya's most recent past, a play about displacement, dispossession, and betrayal, to be written in a local language and acted by the very peasants who had lived these themes every day since the 1920s—this was a unique event in Kenyan cultural history. But for the Kenyan state, Ngũgĩ's involvement with the peasantry was dangerous business. Radicalism, it seemed, could only be tolerated at the universities where it was politically ineffective.

In December 1977, as he was to recall in his prison memoirs, *Detained* (1981),¹¹ Ngũgĩ was arrested and held without trial for one year. When released

⁹ *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, London: Heinemann, 1976.

¹⁰ *I Will Marry When I Want (Ngaahika Ndenda)*, London: Heinemann, 1982.

¹¹ *Detained: a writer's prison diary*, London: Heinemann, 1981.

in December 1978, he was barred from returning to his professorial position at the University of Nairobi, but he resumed his writing with a renewed conviction that writing in Gikuyu had not only restored his sense of relevance, but that his imprisonment had validated his commitment to using culture as a weapon for social change. *Caitani Mutharabaini* (1979), later translated as *Devil on the Cross*,¹² had been written on toilet paper in prison. In this novel, a sardonic satire on the ideology of wealth, which often rings with the influence of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1966), Ngũgĩ presents us with a contemporary tale of avarice and greed in which members of the new capitalist class in Kenya compete to see who is the biggest thief of them all; it is as if the devil has been let loose on the poor country. A musical in Gikuyu, *Maaitu Njugira*, was acted by the peasants of Kamiriithu in 1981, but already the government of Kenya was watching Ngũgĩ's activities warily, accusing him of engaging in politics under the guise of culture.

The truth is that the politics of Kenya were undergoing some unpredictable changes during this period: while culture had been tolerated under the thaw that followed Kenyatta's death in 1978, a struggle for power was developing among the ruling elite, and the state was once more singling out cultural workers and intellectuals as scapegoats. In July 1982, after an abortive coup attempt by airmen, President Daniel Arap Moi moved quickly to consolidate his power by crushing all dissent and neutralising all cultural activities. Ngũgĩ, who had left Kenya for a visit to London, attacked this new repression in essays collected in *Barrel of a Pen* (1983),¹³ as an example of what he had always denounced as the culture of silence; exile was the price he had to pay for speaking out against the new politics in Kenya.

The popularity of Ngũgĩ's Gikuyu works must have convinced him of the timeliness of abandoning the use of English, and since 1981, he has tried to transform this pragmatic decision into a sometimes unconvincing act of faith. In the essays collected in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986),¹⁴ for example, he has tried to argue that because language mediates Being, then his choice to write in his mother tongue has returned him to his roots; by using Gikuyu, he contends, he has escaped from the prisonhouse of the colonial language; he has even made the claim that only the use of African languages guarantees the integrity of works by African writers as African literature. All these claims, plus Ngũgĩ's almost violent determination to write only in Gikuyu, are presented with a defensiveness that really reflects Ngũgĩ's dilemma as a writer in exile.

Now, there is no doubt that Ngũgĩ is a more agile and imaginative writer in his mother tongue than he ever was in English; there is a certain ease with the

¹² *Devil on the Cross* (Caitani Mutharabaini), London: Heinemann, 1982.

¹³ *Barrel of a Pen: resistance to oppression in neo-colonial Kenya*, London: New Beacon Books, 1983.

¹⁴ *Decolonising the Mind: the politics of language in African literature*, London: James Currey, 1986.

language and its many nuances which none of the translations of his works has yet been able to capture. But there is still the irony of Ngũgĩ's historical circumstances to deal with: that the very moment he has rediscovered his individual utterance is also the moment at which he is furthest removed from the people for and about whom he writes. Branded by the state of Kenya as public enemy number one, Ngũgĩ recently published his latest novel, *Matigari* (1986),¹⁵ only to have the book impounded almost immediately in the publisher's offices in Nairobi. It is indeed a reflection of the political crisis in Africa today, that the Kenyan state, by going out of its way to silence the country's most important writer, has become an agent in the impoverishment of its people's culture. Ngũgĩ, however, seems determined to continue writing against this culture of silence.

¹⁵ *Matigari* is forthcoming in English translation from Oxford: Heinemann International, May 1989.

LITERARY FEATURE REVIEWS

White writing

Lewis Nkosi

The Essential Gesture: writing, politics and places

Nadine Gordimer

London: Jonathan Cape. 1988. 356pp. £15.00hb

White Writing: on the culture of letters in South Africa

J M Coetzee

New Haven, Connecticut/London: Yale University Press. 1988. 193pp. £14.95hb

It is a remarkable fact, when you think about it, that South African literature has developed almost entirely without the existence of any strong local criticism. The review essay in the academic and the literary journals, sometimes written with verve and even extreme elegance, the kind of which novelist, Dan Jacobson, has been the undisputed master, has represented almost the sole intervention of a critical consciousness in our literary activities.

For white writers with their easy access to university education, to well-stocked public libraries and an easily definable literary culture, this has not mattered much. For black writers, often poor and cut off from many of these supportive cultural institutions, the absence of any informed local criticism has been wholly disastrous. As Nadine Gordimer notes in one of the essays in *The Essential Gesture*, back in the early 1960s Ezekiel Mphahlele and I made an attempt to inaugurate such a criticism from the distance of European exile but the books were quickly banned from the country. Thereafter the black cultural debate was confined, in the words of Nadine Gordimer 'to conferences of exiles and exiles' publications and at home to a clandestine affair showing itself here and there in white and/or literary journals' (p 171). Although this is no longer strictly true, as the critical interventions of Njabulo Ndebele will tend to show, for a long time the absence of a strong critical tradition in the black community meant that writers who might have benefited from a vigorous critical debate were compelled to create their works in a kind of aesthetic void, subject to the pressures of mindless political fiat, always a prey to the critical vandalism of white do-gooders.

The Essential Gesture is a labour of love during which Stephen Clingman (who published a full-length study of Nadine Gordimer in 1986) in collabora-

tion with his author has compiled a catalogue of some 160 titles out of which they made this selection. In some respects it can be said that the pieces brought together here belong exactly to the kind of casual commentaries on art and letters which I described as characterising the only mode of cultural criticism to which the South African public has been accustomed. The dominant interest they provide is merely to confirm what we only know of Gordimer's private and public preoccupations from reading her novels. Of more than casual interest is the title essay, 'The Essential Gesture', and 'Living in the Interregnum' in which the novelist, with a rare passion, stakes a claim to the life of the imagination without yielding ground on her claims to an ethical life.

The kind of novels which J M Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer write are as different in style and form as are the approaches which the two writers adopt in their considerations of cultural issues. Not only is one type of discourse quite different from the other but the levels at which the two writers engage with South African culture or its absence are also different. I speak of its 'absence' because it is arguable whether in a country in which the races remain so deeply divided by force of statute, by force of habit and habitation, we are at all entitled to speak of a single South African culture rather than of a number of ethnic or national cultures. In fact, it is precisely to that question that both these books address themselves: how a single national consciousness is to be attained and a South African identity achieved. Both books reflect the frustrations experienced by whites in trying to forge an identity separate from that of the black majority. Coetzee is very clear on this:

In this way, we see better why the lone poet in empty space is by no means a peripheral figure in South African writing. In the words he throws out to the landscape, in the echoes he listens for, he is seeking a dialogue with Africa, a reciprocity with Africa, that will allow him an identity better than that of a visitor, stranger, transient. (p 8)

Then Coetzee fingers the dilemma of the South African poet of landscape:

It began to be apparent that the ultimate fate of whites was going to depend a great deal more urgently on an accommodation with black South Africans than on an accommodation with the South African landscape. (p 8)

What constitutes the difference, therefore, between the two books is hardly that most fundamental question which agitates white South Africa; more than anything else it is a question of style. Gordimer is personal: 'I have to offer you myself as my most closely observed specimen,' she told her New York audience in a 1982 lecture also included in this book. She also sounds more politically involved—one might even say more politically anguished—by the spectacle of her country's drift toward revolutionary violence and race war. Over the years her fiction has been nothing if not a careful annotation of that anguish.

To my knowledge, Coetzee has never participated in or lent his very considerable prestige to the anti-apartheid struggle. Although this might have been just

a pose, at times he has even expressed doubt as to the propriety of describing him as 'a South African novelist'. In a 1983 interview with Tony Morphet he was asked whether he considered the task of writing *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) to have been presented to him by 'the history of South Africa specifically', and Coetzee's answer was astonishingly non-committal: 'I sometimes wonder whether it isn't simply that vast and wholly ideological superstructure constituted by publishing, reviewing and criticism that is forcing on me the fate of being a "South African novelist".'¹

Not surprisingly Coetzee's tone in *White Writing* is more detached and the mode of analysis more academic than Gordimer's passionate, self-lacerating engagement with her subject-matter, which is by no means the same thing as saying Coetzee's cultural analyses are therefore less politically useful. What Coetzee has set out to do and sometimes succeeds magnificently in doing is to analyse the ways in which white observers, visitors and settlers alike, from the days of the first settlement of the Cape by the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth century to modern literary interpreters, have attempted to read the South African landscape. They have failed, in Coetzee's opinion, because they tried to impose on an alien African landscape a European framework and conventions of reading landscape, deriving from the interpretive code built up from the genre of the pastoral and the picturesque. In Coetzee's words: 'This landscape remains alien, impenetrable, until language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it.' For if the real Africa 'will always slip through the net woven by European categories', the question arises 'whether native African languages may not be in harmony with the landscape as European languages are not'. Somewhere Coetzee poses the question, but hardly gives us a satisfactory answer, as to how it was that white settlers in America were able to naturalise their language to the new landscape. He writes:

It is no oversimplification to say that landscape art and landscape writing in South Africa from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth revolve around the question of finding a language to fit Africa, a language that will be authentically African.

However, this could never be achieved simply by asking the European to learn an African language 'from outside'; he would have to know the language "'like a native", sharing the mode of consciousness of the people born to it, and to that extent giving up his European identity' (italics mine).

In Coetzee's view the problems of representation 'raised by the interior plateau, and particularly by the flat, arid Karoo', were more daunting, more intractable to first attempts by poets of European background: 'the problems, to put it in its crudest form, of finding enough in the landscape to fill the painting or poem; or, to put it in a different way, of finding an art form responsive to "empty" country' (p 49). Coetzee has enough fun showing that once the poet's attempts at a dialogue with the African landscape are disap-

¹ Interview with Tony Morphet in *TriQuarterly* 69, Spring/Summer 1987.

pointed the confrontation 'becomes more and more antagonistic'; tracking down a poem in which A S Cripps attempts to bring the veld to life by a resort to what Coetzee calls 'metaphoric excesses', he wryly observes that 'because they [such metaphorical excesses] fail to compel the veld to yield up its essence they are predictably followed by a reaction in which the veld is condemned as unresponsive to language':

What can you yield of delight to those who . . .

Seek for elusive Beauty, crave for the spell of her voice? (Lines from Cripps's poem).

At the end of the most provocative reading of the early attempts by white South African settlers to domesticate an alien landscape, Coetzee sums up:

The dominating questions, particularly in poetry, become: How are we to read the African landscape? Is it readable at all? Is it readable only through African eyes, writeable only in an African language? Is the very enterprise of reading the African landscape doomed, in that it prescribes the quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment? Behind these questions, in turn, lies a historical insecurity regarding the place of European heritage in the African landscape such as we do not encounter in America – an insecurity not without cause.

I have given disproportionate space to Coetzee's chapters on the ways in which white settlers in South Africa tried to represent landscape in their writing and painting because, unexpectedly, they are by far the richest and most suggestive in the book; by comparison, though long, the chapters on the Farm Novel and the novels of 'blood and the taint of miscegenation', besides raising serious issues of interpretation which I have not the space to consider here, are laboured and constitute the dreariest parts of the book. Similarly, distorted visitor accounts of 'Hottentot idleness' are the commonplace of colonial literature. Our only surprise is Coetzee's own surprise at such distorted views.

The only major weakness in Coetzee's hermeneutic project is to have left out of account altogether black writing, even if such an exclusion is to be justified by a certain economy of reading. This exclusion which has only negligible results elsewhere is severely distortive in parts of Coetzee's analyses. There is no way, for example, in which Coetzee can find answers to some of the questions he has been asking except by drawing upon the evidence of traditional oral literatures and contemporary writing of the indigenous populations – questions such as: Is the African landscape readable only through African eyes, writeable only in an African language? It is not true, as Coetzee tries to argue, that 'among black writers, even those of dual African-English linguistic culture, the mode (landscape poetry), without precedent in the vernaculars, has barely been practised' (p 174). True, in traditional African poetry poetic celebration of nature is integrated with other concerns, and in that sense does not constitute a separate genre of poetry, and as far as contemporary writing is concerned we have to know just how much weight we are to place

on Coetzee's use of the modifier, 'barely' practised. In any case, is it only in the art of verse as understood in Europe that nature is to be 'read' in the works of black writers? Might not their prose works, assuming we know how to distinguish poetry from prose here, give us just as valid a description of African landscape as filtered through an African consciousness? To enter these caveats is hardly to minimise the value of Coetzee's interpretive enterprise, and few will wish to quarrel with the final paragraph in *White Writing*:

From William Burchell to Laurens van der Post, imperial writing has seen as the truest native of South Africa the Bushman, whose romance has lain precisely in his belonging to a vanishing race. Official historiography long told a tale of how until the nineteenth century of the Christian era the interior of what we now call South Africa was unpeopled. The poetry of empty space may one day be accused of furthering the same fiction.

Speaking from the periphery

Elleke Boehmer

White Boy Running

Christopher Hope

London: Secker and Warburg. 1988. 273pp. £10.95hb

The House Next Door to Africa

Denis Hirson

London: Carcanet. 1987. 99pp. £9.95hb

Bloodsong and Other Stories of South Africa

Ernst Havemann

London: Hamish Hamilton. 1988. 134pp. £10.95hb/£5.95pb

The Trap, and A Dance in the Sun

Dan Jacobson

Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. 205pp. £3.95pb

Selected Plays: Master Harold . . . and the Boys, Bloodknot, Hello and Goodbye, Boesman and Lena

Athol Fugard

Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987. 255pp. £5.95pb

States of Emergency

André Brink

London: Faber & Faber. 1988. 248pp. £9.95hb

As the South African *imperium in imperio* muscles into its third Emergency, and its fortieth year of misrule, it seems curious, at least to this reader, that publishers have marked 1988 by marshalling together the group of white male writers featured here. The sense of discomfort lies not simply in the encounter with a patriarchal company. There is also an uneasy awareness that one of the prime tactics of the regime is to deny alternative traditions and that, for this very reason, more effort should be made to allow other voices a wider hearing. Where histories, as well as heroes and heroines, are suppressed, those sources of guidance which lie in precedent are blocked from view. All that remain are the oracles already legitimated and then coercively enforced, the canons of authority and belief set to record, the languages which the regime suffers to let speak.

These remarks are presented by way of reservation rather than refusal. For it can also be said that where, as Christopher Hope so ably demonstrates, the system has the command of meanings, and those meanings are constantly changed, there is wisdom in repeating old voices and familiar expressions. Appropriately, then, rhythms of reiteration and recall also unite these writers. The works by Athol Fugard and Dan Jacobson are in fact reprints; Hope plays with permuted patterns of *déjà vu*; André Brink creates resonances between seen and unseen texts; those who write from exile—the majority—reminisce.

Another redeeming feature lies, perhaps paradoxically, in the solitary and self-conscious tone which marks these accounts. Nowhere is there a serious claim to be authoritative or accountable to a constituency of readers. In almost all cases—most obviously in the Fugardian plays—speech is in the first person. These writers are aware of speaking from the periphery, in narrow gaps, and only for themselves—through the chinks in the security fencing perhaps. In a way they preempt readers' doubts: they have lived in the Unreal City of white privilege within the apartheid state, they have not known the distress nor the physical agony of struggle, yet they seem to feel that they must speak of their alienation lest its absurdities grow entirely commonplace.

Christopher Hope's *White Boy Running*, charted along the track of a return

journey, is the most frankly autobiographical of these accounts. Hope approaches South Africa in the manner of a palimpsest. Over a decade ago he left the country because it defied his powers of credulity; he has returned for the run-up to the 1987 election, to see how the strangeness of its political formations have shaped out. Everywhere, in his old haunts, he sees images of the present juxtaposed with or superimposed on those of the past, and decodes the difference. Hope's wry, laconic style belies the lucidity of his perceptions and the force of his summary excoriations. He has the ability to condense the notorious complexity of the South African situation into a terse aphoristic formulation or syntactical condundrum that points to the heart of its terror and 'brazen' absurdity. He himself says that only through the construction of symbolic correlatives is it possible to perceive the way things are. The reality of 'South Africa' lies in illusion and dream, though backed by the power of guns and tanks. The Afrikaner will keep hold of power, has spoken of change, yet cannot change without ceding power. Defying Rudyard Kipling's predictions, he has learned to rule with the bullet and the ballot box. The white Calvinist presence in South Africa has thus come to bear similarities with the appearance of the extinct elephant bird in the Transvaal Museum—it is a strange and otherworldly creature, but 'hefty, thoroughly muscular'. Hope uses the distanced and estranging perspective of the returning exile to effect, but his position is therefore, by definition, privileged. He finds, perhaps to his relief, that there is even less space in South Africa for liberals than there was before. So he can observe and then retreat again, which is why his account at times reads like an informed visitor's guide book to South Africa. Things are rather different for those who face the tanks, the guns and the bullets head on.

The House Next Door to Africa, a first novel, is a 'younger' account, less cynical, more imbued with a sense of marvel, though Hirson's gaze coincidentally converges with that of Hope in images of Zoo Lake in Johannesburg—ground of suburban recreation and forgetting. Set within an intensely visual, dream-like sequence of short verse paragraphs in the present tense, Hirson unreels images of a Northern suburbs childhood and adolescence. Coloured snaps of aunts in the park and sepia memories, refractions of a fading Russian Jewish heritage, foreground portrait shots in sharper, more immediate focus: maids and piano teachers as seen by the lucid eye of childhood, 'official' South African history in cinematographic synopsis, detailed case sketches of plant and animal life in the yard and, in books at least, photographs of Sharpeville 1960. Somewhere, off-stage, where metaphors are not as readily available, a father is gaoled for political offences, is later released, and then precipitately leaves the country. As with the other figures who appear and disappear in Hirson's image collection, there is no developed sense of connection with this personage. He does, however, live in the house in the form of his books. Despite its static visual quality, Hirson's work takes note of such displacements. Under a state in which identities are demarcated, people

appear out of position, in estranging disguise, family configurations shift, a date changes face; the only constant is the movement of words, skidding glibly through Hirson's deft hands, as he recalls an unreality that was real to him. Yet for all its compelling humour and honesty, and the concentrated force of its symbolism, the acts of suspension and occlusion that of necessity constitute this recollected, present-tense text, do not allow a reader to rest easy. Hirson's images may be so sharply focused as to achieve metaphorical signification, yet when his actual signifiers smoothly coalesce in making up a white world, and are drawn exclusively from that world, that white world alone is confirmed as present and real. Hirson thus enacts, perhaps consciously, the symbolic barricading of the white suburban dream. The sense of remoteness is captured in his title: to be part of white 'South Africa' is to stand alongside what could otherwise be South Africa.

More at home—that is, colloquial, chatty, even familiar—is the narrative tone that unites the various speakers in Ernst Havemann's short story collection, *Bloodsong*. The collective voice is reminiscent of a latterday Oom Schalk Lourens, a simple mild-mannered story-teller who finds himself in difficult contexts of 'emergency' and 'border incident'—situations of moral incongruity and distress he only half perceives. The purblind effect comes not only from the naivete of the story-tellers—the child in 'Bloodsong', or the army chap of 'A farm at Raraba'. It is also the fact that single individuals, the 'decent', ordinary citizens represented here, once caught in a polarised environment, are unable to transcend the structures that separate. Humanistically, they may believe it possible to embrace divisions, but their belief is a sign that they do not confront the situation whole. The cumulative implication backs up the old and oft-repeated assertion that a good number of South African whites, in various roles and positions, remain doggedly well-meaning. In the very real context of cold-blooded brutality, evoked by Havemann in occasional stark paragraphs, such claims appear somewhat anachronistic and out of place. What seems to have happened here is that the well-meaning composite narrator sat down to wring stories out of various typical South African situations, and found them already to be twisted. The question remains as to what dread hand is holding the wreaking power. Where is the master of the situation hiding?

The names of Athol Fugard and Dan Jacobson require little introduction to the South African literary canon though the continued inclusion of that of Jacobson may demand some justification. Jacobson's two novellas, *The Trap* and *A Dance in the Sun*, recreate that familiar colonial situation of the white male isolated and in crisis. In the middle of the Karoo landscape, beneath the searing African sun, Jacobson's heroes stand (or dance) alone, and somewhere on the periphery of the 'empty', waste spaces to which they lay one or other claim, the black man watches and awaits his moment. Aspects of this situation might be related to the feelings of alienation and mistrust that undercut a

racist's sense of security, for example, or to the restless, ruthless vigilance required to maintain conditions of separateness. Yet no amount of re-reading can dislodge the liberal individual subject from the position he confidently assumes at the centre of Jacobson's text. For this reason, and therefore contrary to what the blurb claims, these stories are interesting chiefly as period documents of the 1950s, drawing on the anxieties of miscegenation under the Mixed Marriages Act, the claustrophobic domesticity of rural apartheid, humanistic outrage at individual instances of racist illogic. The wider landscapes of apartheid—urban conflict, the mass military presence, the machineries of state—none of these have yet entered the field of vision. Evocations of the dry Karoo landscape may be valuable as atmospheric set pieces, yet diffused across slow-moving and backward-looking narratives, such descriptions seem gratuitous, as does Fletcher's final dance in the sun. Once again the overall effect is anachronistic, much more seriously so than with Havemann. One sees confirmed a long-standing suspicion that the 'South African' brand name sells books.

With Fugard, though, it would be difficult to make quite the same claim. He is also the self-aware white liberal, helplessly looking on as a history whose leavings are pain and guilt, passes him by. But his inevitable alienation as a white man is perhaps countered by the unemphatic and yet unstinting attention he has given to representing ordinary lives and not necessarily unique and therefore 'dramatic' situations. The characters in the plays collected here do not speak on apartheid, they actually live it. They also make no claim to that 'objective' stance on which an ameliorative tone depends. More convincingly than in Havemann's case, Fugard's concern with day-to-day survival, accompanied by his bald frankness of appraisal and strong dramatic sense, has enabled him to recreate aspects of the ugliness wrought by apartheid upon human relationships. These four plays have to do with close family situations in which the anger and anguish expressed in each case refer back, as Morrie says in *The Blood Knot*, to 'the insult, injury and inhumanity' of the apartheid system.

As well as being the only one in this group of writers to present an extended narrative, André Brink is also the most excruciatingly self-aware. His novel, *States of Emergency*, names its own crisis, amongst others. Following the narrator's neurotic moves to scrutinise his problematic status as author and lover in a post-1985 South Africa, the text restlessly doubles back on itself, displays double and triple narrative options, trips up, splits. The exercise is rigorous, even obsessive. For the same reason that love affairs in a context of Emergency and police siege seem out of place, if not impossible, and despite the self-conscious deference paid to Roland Barthes, such textual contortions in Brink's work should perhaps be called manoeuvres rather than play. Brink wishes to escape from the rigid polarities, the relentless 'structuralist' 'either/or' of apartheid, and to allow meanings to proliferate, but certain brutal truths keep invading to undercut textual games. The problem is that the townships are

burning. Brink is of course sharply aware of this, though in the end the conflagration features mainly as the flaming scenario for his narrator's passion. As the story progresses, the 1968-type parallels between forbidding structuralisms and the apartheid system start to sag a little. At the centre—and there is unmistakably a centre—of this narrative is located (as the author himself hastens to corroborate) yet another Brink saga of intense, doomed and unutterable (heterosexual) love. The rather conventional affair between the 'prof' and his graduate student takes place in the stifling confines of an Eastern Cape university town most uncommonly like Grahamstown. Even were it not for this claustrophobic, threatening environment, the affair seems foreclosed from the start by the presence of another doomed love, that of aspirant novelist, Jane Ferguson, and political figure, Chris de Villiers—theirs is a story to which the narrative continually refers. In the state of siege, it would seem, love is in jeopardy. The state, as with Chris and Jane, or other commitments, or conscience, forbid it. Here the personal is not political enough. Realising this, Brink's response has been to unsheath this novelistic interleaving of textuality and actuality. Contrary to the assumptions of apartheid, he so proves that it is impossible to maintain boundaries—'reality' repeatedly invades the text and the text holds out more freedom than reality. The mistake Brink makes, however, is to become excessively fascinated by his own textual moves. Aside from the problematics of representing political alternatives by means of narrative polysemy, Brink's 'knowingness' as a writer becomes pedantic, portentous, often boring. Parts of this text could well be read as catalogues of the trendiest of names in literary theory. The final effect, it must be said, is of a writer who has done all the requisite reading, but has mislaid his writing tools. As pretentious puns crowd together with flagrant solecisms and extremely dog-eared clichés, this novel at times comes close to demonstrating in itself the crisis of writing in the South African context.

White writing, in or of South Africa, is clearly a difficult endeavour. Behind the individual white liberal's question of 'what am I doing?' lies the more general, and trickier, 'what shall be done?' It may be that there is no solution to be found in writing. Yet a start could be made, and here the onus does not lie with the writings. Room must be made elsewhere for other kinds of discourse—not simply other discursive styles, but other discursive positions, formed by experience which is not only that of white men.

LITERARY REVIEWS

Stray foreigners

Baumgartner's Bombay

Anita Desai

London: Heinemann. 1988. 230pp. £10.95hb

'Leaning forward as if to throw Baumgartner backwards,' Farrokh, the dour owner of a squalid café, bawls: "Push them out. Out into the gutter. Tell them, go and beg . . . go live like lepers in the street, but not come to Café de Paris, please." Polite and intimidated, Baumgartner looks towards the 'bag of pale fur on the table; it might have been a cat'. The young German with 'a mass of blond curls', the object of the café owner's fury and scorn, is slumped in a drugged sleep; and Baumgartner's watery eyes make out 'two solid brick-red arms of human flesh that lay on either side of it protectively'.

The eponymous Baumgartner, a German Jew who had drifted into India just before the Second World War, and who has surrendered his home and his heart to the starving and mutilated cats of Bombay, offers the shelter of his home to the stranger, too. The consequences of this kindness, though bizarre and violent, have the awful ring of inevitability. It is to Anita Desai's credit that she manages this without making the novel appear the least bit contrived.

Before we reach the end of *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Desai, with skill, insight and humour, unfolds the story of her two main characters, Baumgartner and Lotte. But for the circumstance of their being in India, and sharing the German language, they have little in common. Baumgartner muses on this when he thinks of dropping in on Lotte on his way home from the café.

She was the only one he could tell about the odd encounter with the fair-haired boy, about the flood of memories of old Berlin it had let loose. Not that Lotte knew *his* Berlin . . . It was unthinkable that she could ever have been in the company of his mother, of her friends—disgraceful Lotte with her fat legs that always contrived to show so much of themselves under her skirts, her hair dyed a livid foxy red with henna.

Lotte, who starts her career as a cabaret performer in Bombay under the assumed name of 'Lola', has her share of 'ups' when she's young and 'downs' as she grows older. She is a marvellous creation, recognisable as one of those young European women who lived on the fringes of Anglo-India during the Raj, fabricating their past, relishing the attentions of the British tommies, taking what they could—while they could—as mistresses of rich Indians. Lotte becomes the mistress of a skinny, dhoti-clad, beetle-nut chewing Indian who treats her lavishly. She is happy. 'She swung the sequinned bag on her wrist . . . Outside were the red and yellow canna lilies, loudly chattering mynah birds, a flowering tree. She seemed delighted to take her part in these cockatoo colours, this macaw setting.' But, as she says later, 'That was when my Kanti was living. Everything had to be nice then—silver dishes for the nuts on the table, plastic lace curtains in the windows.' Once Kanti dies, she gradually loses what he has given her and, too old to attract another rich man, Lotte feels she has missed out altogether. She tells Baumgartner, 'Everyone was like that in the war—people made fortunes—then vanished . . . Only we stayed, like fools. Here, amongst the thieves, the cholera, the mosquitoes.'

Baumgartner—who was incarcerated with the other Germans in India for the dura-

tion of the war, and had elected to stay on after he was released—says, 'Where could we go, Lotte? Where could you and I have gone?' and Lotte, her eyes glazed with gin, scratching the 'slack flesh hanging from her arms like two legs of mutton', mutters, 'Yes, there was nowhere to go. Germany was gone—phut. Europe was gone . . . Let us face it, *Liebchen*. There is no home for us. So where can we go?'

But India, strictly structured and oriented to the family, is little inclined to accommodate stray foreigners; and as Desai traces their descent from comparative opulence into loneliness, alienation and poverty, one feels the power of her writing. One of the most poignant moments in the book occurs when Lotte and Baumgartner fall asleep together, their ravaged bodies drawing comfort not from any carnal caress but from the touch of each other as,

With small groans, they made themselves comfortable against each other, finding concavities into which to press their convexities—till at last they made one comfortable whole, two halves of a large mishapen bag of flesh.

There are no wrong notes, not a single false sentiment. Desai is in absolute control. And this is more surprising when one considers she is writing so convincingly about European characters; it takes a while to register that the book has been written by an Indian. I feel that Desai has advanced not only her own writing, but also the writing of the subcontinent in her comprehensive and sympathetic creation of Baumgartner and Lotte as they live, breathe, talk and think, reacting to the alien Indian environment.

Baumgartner's Bombay is a complex novel of many strands, and many dimensions, and one facet which struck me particularly was a scene in which Baumgartner stumbles upon a dark cave. It is almost as if his presence and his senses impose themselves upon the memorable but exasperating cave scene in *A Passage to India* (1924), and heighten our understanding of it just that little bit, that tiny step one wishes E M Forster had allowed his heroine.

Then there are the cats, 'Like a swarm of pigeons in a feathery flutter', their feline presences witness and testimony to a lonely life of service:

One came and lay across his feet, something he rarely did in such hot weather. Another stood by his knee, dug her claws into the material of his trousers, managed to inject their tips into his flesh, and then dropped away, visibly pleased at having left her mark. A third climbed on to the chair back and balanced there till he fell on to Baumgartner's neck, then sprang off with a yowl and retired to the balcony. Baumgartner knew he was being summoned.

No other writer has portrayed as vividly the cyclical nightmare of India's poverty; which, when combined with the almost bureaucratic stranglehold of its stratified society—and its nonchalant disregard for life—can destroy all initiative even in the middle classes. In her previous novel, *In Custody* (1984), we followed Desai's characters as they were stripped of hope and direction by the obstacles that confronted their least endeavour; where even the attempt to tape an old poet's voice turned into a paralysing series of disasters. Desai is as frank in her portrayal of India's poverty in her new novel, but in *Baumgartner's Bombay* she tempers its relentless depiction with touches of beauty, and a wry and deep understanding of life that lights up the novel.

BAPSI SIDHWA *

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* Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) is reviewed below.

Tearing the Punjab

Days of the Turban

Partap Sharma

London: Futura. 1988. 385pp. £4.95pb

Ice-Candy Man

Bapsi Sidhwa

London: Heinemann. 1988. 277pp. £11.95hb

In a desperate attempt to put an end to the anti-government terror being organised by Sikh extremists from the Golden Temple, Indira Gandhi sent the Indian Army into its sacred precincts on 5 June 1984. One of the casualties of the raid was the leading extremist, Bhindranwale. Five months later, Indira Gandhi herself was assassinated by Sikh security guards and fierce anti-Sikh riots broke out in Delhi and other Indian cities.

Partap Sharma's novel, *Days of the Turban*, which grew out of the research he undertook for a documentary film on the events of June 1984, attempts to situate the current upheavals of Punjab state in the context of a long and turbulent history—invasions from the north which turned the land into a perpetual field of battle, British rule which ended with partition and the division of the Punjab between Pakistan and Hindustan, the Indian government's hostility towards regional self-assertion and the issue of Khalistan. The provenance of the work helps to explain its appeal—comprehensive documentation, historical perspective, topicality—as well as its limitations. For, fascinating though Sharma's political and social commentary may be, this is insufficiently integrated with the simple story he tells concerning Balbir, the discontented grandson of a powerful landowner, who becomes entangled in the operations of a small-time gun-runner, and a terrorist action group led by the charismatic Amar Singh. As a result, there are times when the writing resembles a history of the Sikhs more than a novel; and others when narratorial assertions clash directly with the imaginative rendering of the situation.

Take, for example, Sharma's view that caste in the Punjab 'does not carry with it the bigotry and vehemence' that it does in some other states. What the fictional plot underlines, in fact, is that caste prejudices in the Punjab as elsewhere run deep and fierce. A *harijan* settlement is swiftly and unconscionably obliterated; Uday Singh's low caste makes him an easy victim of both Sikhs and Hindus, whereas Balbir's Muhiyal status guarantees a measure of safety even within the enemy camp; the fear that he might end up marrying a merchant's daughter persuades Balbir to abide by his grandfather's choice of a more suitable bride.

More thoughtful, because more prepared to entertain the contradictions inherent in the subject, is Sharma's treatment of the institution of the family in India. He deems that the unshakeable strength of Punjab, and perhaps its regenerative power too, rests upon 'clan kinship that goes beyond religion and pre-dates the advent of all religions'.

but he is aware also that the ramifications of the family system breed conservatism, oppression, and nepotism. His tone, in speaking of family loyalty and unity, strikes a celebratory note, yet in recounting the stratagems employed by Balbir's people to rescue him from the Golden Temple, the menacing aspects of interlocking structures of family, big business, state intelligence and illegal operations, are clearly indicated. Even Balbir learns to perceive some of the deeper implications of the problem:

... you want to be free of the warm embrace of hinduism just as I want to be free of my family. I want to get away, where I don't know or really care, but somewhere where I can grow on my own, learn on my own, be on my own. Yet every time I've tried to break free, the family has answered me with good reasons that keep me trapped. Maybe I'll come back—who knows?—but I want to have that choice ... I want my identity and independence just as you want yours.

In that moment of realisation, personal and ideological struggle, intuitive truth and political consciousness, romantic tale and discursive text become coincident. A first novel, *Days of the Turban* exhibits many flaws. At the same time, it is very readable and grapples with a complex subject with verse and insight.

One of the memories which haunts the patriarch, Lok Raj, is his long journey—'a jagged, frightening course covering hundreds of miles' and lasting three months—out of the newly-declared Pakistan into the safety, for Sikhs like himself, of Punjab state. The elevated strain in *Days of the Turban* recalls other fictional accounts of this period of Punjab history. Much earlier, Khuswant Singh had brought his fine novel, *Train to Pakistan* (1955), to its close with Juggut Singh's death-defying attempt to save a train-load of Muslims from destruction.

A woman, a member of an ethnic minority, an expatriate living in the USA: perhaps it is her consciousness of her special position as a writer that prompted Bapsi Sidhwa to adopt a different angle of approach from her predecessors. *Ice-Candy Man*, her third novel, re-examines the political upheavals in the years leading up to and immediately following partition, but the heroic note is muted in favour, generally, of a deflating satire and, instead of deeds of epic proportion, there are shabby betrayals, desperate remedies, and lucky escapes. That this is a deliberate ploy is clear from her handling of Ranna's account of how Pir Pindo, a Muslim village in rural Punjab, was savagely wiped out by Sikh militants. The pattern and details of this story are familiar, and by encompassing it within the larger and more unusual narrative of the little Parsee girl, Lenny Sethi, Sidhwa acknowledges her indebtedness to, and departure from, established convention.

Four years old and recovering from an attack of polio which has left her lame in one leg and in need of surgery, Lenny's early lessons in pain seem to have resulted in a heightened sensitivity to the exploitative energies and absorbing pleasures of a swiftly changing world. If the rumours circulating about the war in Europe and elsewhere in Asia leave others unmoved, they solidify into wretched nightmares for Lenny. By the time she is eight, she has witnessed the violent births of Pakistan and India, and come close, through the shattering experiences of those dear to her, to terrors only too real.

The authenticity of Lenny's response springs in part from her capacity to learn from these experiences. The cheapness of human lives, when religion is harnessed to the struggle for political goals, is realised in images of the body's vulnerability—the crescent-shaped scar on Renna's skull, Masseur's hacked flesh, the train full of slaughtered Muslims, Hindus set alight with their houses and, a central concern in this novel, women kidnapped, assaulted, and considered too unclean to return to their families. At

the same time, the life of the body is everywhere asserted and includes, among its delights, its strengths and its subtleties, Ayah's plump and generous bosom, Godmother's firm, supportive back, Mother's satiny skin, Masseur's cunning fingers, Ice-Candy Man's aggressive toe.

As the ambiguities and contradictions residing in the political situation in the Punjab are explored in the course of Lenny's narrative, so examples multiply of Sidhwa's talent for fusing broad humour and trenchant criticism, concrete observation and imaginative insight, the realities of everyday existence and the abstractions of politics and religion. With tension among the communities in Lahore beginning to mount, what were games not so long ago—such as the periodic scramble to strip Hari, the gardener, of his dhoti—become transformed into ugly exercises in oppression—Hari's dhoti and his uncircumcised condition are now the symbols of his difference which has to be obliterated. Disguise, once harmless deception, becomes perforce the fashion—Hari is circumcised and acquires the new name of Himat Ali; Moti and Muccho are converted to Christianity—and assumes sinister proportions when, as in the case of Ice-Candy Man, high-sounding motives are used to cover up human baseness. Understandably, Lenny must resist such specious labels as 'fate' in accounting for human suffering: 'I've seen Ayah carried away—and it had less to do with fate than with the will of men.'

An important aspect of Lenny's convincingness as a character springs paradoxically from her unreliability as a narrator. She misinterprets her mother's activities at the height of the troubles in Lahore; reacting fiercely against some forms of cruelty, she is only too eager to fall in with the insipid bickering and bullying which keeps Aunt Mini bound to the status of 'Slavesister'; she mistakes Ice-Candy Man's intentions when, one among a mob of Muslims, he invades her home and coaxes her into revealing the whereabouts of her Hindu Ayah; finally, as a story-teller, she is unable to satisfy her readers' expectations. What happens to Papoo, the sweeper's daughter? to the friends who flee Warris Street? to Ice-Candy Man? to the beloved Ayah? There are no answers forthcoming.

By situating Lenny's narrative in the present, Sidhwa imposes limits upon her perspective. This, however, is only one aspect of a complicated strategy. There is also the occasional back-stepping into the past tense which renders time an unstable factor in the novel, and blurs the line separating the immediacy of experience from the vividness of a memory in which events are 'branded over an inordinate length of time'. Forty years on and it would seem that Lenny continues to 'live' her memories of the 'hellish fires' and 'monstrous mobs' of her childhood. What is more, it is a process of reliving in the course of which the past is interrogated and the dilemma conceived as continuing:

Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered river? Won't their water drain into the jagged cracks? Not satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear the Punjab.

Like the questions raised concerning the plight of individuals whose lives were broken in half by the partition of India, these produce, even now, no conclusive answers. Indeed, it would be impossible to read this witty, disturbing and entirely absorbing novel without being aware of the tragic presence of 'a torn Punjab' continuously overshadowing the narrative.

SHIRLEY CHEW

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Privileged insulation

Plans for Departure

Nayantara Sahgal

London: Penguin. 1987. 216pp. £3.95pb

Mistaken Identity

Nayantara Sahgal

London: Heinemann. 1988. 194pp. £10.95hb

Nayantara Sahgal's fiction has come a long way since her earliest novels were criticised for being strong on politics, but weak on characterisation, and for a simplistic representation of conflicts between East and West. With the publication of her three most recent novels, *Rich Like Us* (1987)* and the two works reviewed here, she has emerged as one of the finest novelists currently writing in India. Yet there is a real continuity running through all of Sahgal's fiction to date. Each of her novels demonstrates a concern with the human effects of politics; and cross-cultural encounters and the problems the privileged have in relating to ordinary people's experiences frequently loom large. The major difference between her mature work and the early fiction is that now her characters' private dilemmas have become sharply individualised and the heavy burden of political commentary that informs all Sahgal's writing is no longer the dead weight that it once was.

Plans for Departure tells the story of a Danish woman, Anna Hansen, who arrives at a Himalayan hill station in the summer of 1914. Her personal odyssey, which represents a flight from a conventional marriage to a well-to-do Englishman, is counterpointed by numerous references to freedom movements and political conflicts around the globe. These include the Suffragettes (Anna's Danish nationality serves as an index of her feminist emancipation), the pre-Gandhian activities of the Congress Party, the events leading up to the First World War, the American Revolution and the struggle for the unification of Italy. In fact there is such a proliferation of political analogies that the novel seems in danger of being top heavy with attempts to relate the tiny microcosm of the hill station (made up of four Westerners and two Indians) to a welter of larger contexts that are often only briefly evoked. Add to this the possible objection that its perspective, like Anna's, is essentially that of an onlooker and it would not be difficult to mount a case against *Plans for Departure* for failing to engage Indian realities. Yet to do this would be unfair, for this is a novel about the difficulties of dialogue across cultures and classes. In an interesting passage in which the narrative jumps forward in time, Anna's granddaughter and her husband label her as someone who 'wasn't anywhere near politics' and the essence of her quest is a Forsterian attempt to connect across the divides of class and culture. Later, there is a reference to Anna's failure to see 'the utter impossibility of this comfortable Western world being part of that other's anxiety and pain'. A similar predicament is dramatised with regard to Anna's social situation in England, where, despite the ravages of the First World War, she is now, in

* Reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 9 (4) October 1987, pp 1399-1402.

the closing pages, securely married to her upper-crust Englishman and living a privileged, insulated existence behind the walls of a castle.

This failure to connect is also present in the novel's narrative method. Sahgal's more recent work seems to be written with the benefit of knowledge of other significant Indian writing in English from the 1980s. Both the situation of *Plans for Departure* and its slow-paced narrative movement which suddenly switches into a higher gear appear to echo Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and the novel's creation of possible mysteries which ultimately prove either to be red herrings or to be totally irresolvable smacks of the post-modernist world of Salman Rushdie, in which sliding signification is paramount. Perhaps the confidence bred by working alongside such contemporaries has been a factor in Sahgal's emergence as a major fictional talent.

Rushdie's influence is more clearly discernible in *Mistaken Identity*, where a reference by the narrator to Scheherazade suggests a similar attitude to story-making as one finds in both *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983). In this novel the narrator/protagonist, Bhushan Singh, son of a *talukdar* raja, has his dandified existence rudely interrupted when he is arrested and thrown into jail along with a group of ill-organised communists and Congress Party workers. Charged with treason, Singh spends three years in jail, during which he is forced to come to terms with aspects of existence from which he has always hitherto been thoroughly protected, and is initially found guilty before being cleared after an appeal. It is during this time that he gradually tells the story of his past life and so, as with Scheherazade and Rushdie's Saleem Sinai, the narrative moment is that of story-telling *in extremis*.

In many ways *Mistaken Identity* is a more satisfying novel than *Plans for Departure*: Sahgal exhibits a much tighter narrative control, as she moves between the two stories of Singh's present and past life, and the frequently disdainful manner of his account is not without a certain comedy. Yet ultimately Singh is more the victim than the master of the novel's ironies. In the dénouement a central narrative peripeteia (he finds that the Muslim girl with whom he has a youthful affair has made a successful marriage to a Turk and not, as he had thought, been wed to a local 'imbecile') leaves him reflecting 'The joke was on me'. In a sense this is the case throughout, for his self-indulgent belief that his private life has no connection with the public world is repeatedly punctured. From the outset the irony of Singh's being charged with treason is very evident. Subsequently it becomes clear that, though he does not see it himself, his life has already afforded startling evidence of the interpenetration of private and public spheres: his affair with his Muslim sweetheart, still a schoolgirl in a *purdah* at the time, has flouted social taboos and precipitated a Hindu-Muslim riot; his killing of the 'imbecile' another.

Yet it is only at the end that Singh gives any suggestion of moving towards a more socially responsible attitude. The final chapter finds him married to the daughter of one of his communist fellow-prisoners, while his hitherto passionately elitist mother has married the communist himself. No total *volte-face* has taken place—this would be psychologically false—and Singh still spends most of his time writing poetry, but the novel has succeeded in offering a fine study of an egotist's dawning consciousness that there are more things in the larger social world than are dreamed of in his philosophy.

JOHN THIEME

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Celebration and lament

Phoenix Fled

Attia Hosain

London: Virago Press. 1988. 203pp. £4.50pb

Sunlight on a Broken Column

Attia Hosain

London: Virago Press. 1988. 319pp. £4.50pb

An aging cook's kohl-rimmed eyes, a doll's house in a burning village, a vase of flowers arranged by a child refugee, a bride's tawdry finery, a photograph torn from a twisted frame: an accumulation of succinct detail, the artful placing of clauses, bring to life Attia Hosain's India in a prose as vivid and vital as the landscapes she describes.

Miscadingly categorised by some as an apologist for the aristocratic and feudal classes, wreathed in nostalgia for the grace of a vanished past, Hosain has said that her concern is with the stories of the underclass, both urban and rural, and their displacements and migrations in this century. She fictionalises, without selfconsciousness, the worlds of the deprived and forgotten, or the merely marginalised. *Phoenix Fled* (first published in 1953), far from being an elegy for a fading feudal past, is both a celebration of, and a lament for, the author's divided country. She articulates its contradictions—wealth and despair, conservatism and accelerating change, past and independent future. Hope and horror mingle in her vision. At its most intense, the sense of loss, of lost lives, rises to an unbearable pitch; brief and allusive, the title story and 'After the Storm' vividly portray horrors in prose as condensed and laden with imagery as poetry.

Though Hosain's intimate, egalitarian knowledge of the lives of the privileged and the poverty-stricken derives from experience, the most compelling of her characters are autonomous products of her imagination. An elderly woman servant, driven by resentment, persecutes her daughter-in-law with a vehemence that pushes the child into insanity, immediately described as possession by devils. A son cheats his mother, another menial worker, of her life's hoarded savings; bereft, she is unable to accept her son's betrayal, which she perceives as a loss of her own honour. An aging cook marries a beautiful young girl, to lose her first to a succession of young lovers and then to the brothels. A retired brigand ekes out his living as a watchman, contemptuous of the cupidity and vulgarity of a colonially tainted Christian convert, retaining his own pride in his past exploits and superior caste.

Hosain's mastery of traditional forms of story-telling (she has written recently of her early influences, the tale-spinning matriarchs and wandering balladeers of her native Oudh) is evident in the taut construction of her narratives, the lyrical cadences of her prose, and the often fatalistic attitudes of her characters. Her particular strength as a writer of short fiction lies in her ability to claim traditional forms for her own distinctly modern and humanitarian preoccupations: bonds between Hindus and Muslims, frayed by partition; bonds between servants and masters, untied by time; bonds between the

sexes, fragile in the face of harshly patriarchal norms. Her work transposes the beauty of traditional art in its entirety into an idiom usually foreign to the form, extending the English language to encompass other, richer landscapes.

Though many links are visible between Hosain's stories and her only novel, the prose of *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (first published in 1962) is more subtle and subdued, suiting itself to the voice of its first-person narrator, a woman of privileged background, Layla. Hosain's reputation as a major chronicler of the Indo-Muslim ethos rests on this novel, constantly reprinted and long regarded as a classic in India. Along with two other classic novels, *Neither the Shore nor the Wave* (1948) by Aziz Ahmad and *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) by Ahmad Ali, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* counterpoints the private history of its protagonist with the public histories of her time. For the first time in an English novel, the narrative voice is that of a woman of the Muslim upper class. Though the events of Hosain's own life would make an absorbing book, she is not a confessional writer, and Layla is only superficially a reflection of her creator. Hosain has chosen to portray a woman who, though endowed with the awareness obtained from a liberal, eclectic education, is ultimately circumscribed by the limited choices offered to her by her environment. Hosain left India shortly after partition to pursue a career as a writer, broadcaster and journalist. The subsequent events of her life are veiled in mystery and legend. Her narrator chooses, instead, a university education, followed by marriage against the wishes of her family, a reclusive widowhood, and, ultimately, remarriage. Attia Hosain artfully opposes the subjective, individualistic rebellion of an aristocratic woman to the strictures of the society which alternately permits and prohibits her limited freedoms. Autonomy is, as such, only partial, and achieved by eventual compromise; but this is not primarily a feminist *bildungsroman*. In this respect, at least, Layla is Hosain's mirror-image: a witness to her time and to the division of her family and her nation.

Building up slowly to the cataclysmic events of 1947, adopting, at times, the poetic sensibility of the modernist and at others the measured realism of the nineteenth-century novelist, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is the moving chronicle of a period and of a city—Lucknow, in all its tarnished and decaying splendour.

A gallery of minor portrayals embellishes this richly detailed picture of time and place. Each group is presented with its own point of view, each individual character in his own voice, filtered through the consciousness of a highly intelligent, self-questioning and sceptical narrator. Hosain herself has said that she prefers her shorter fiction; too much here is left unsaid, gaps of reticence and unresolved pain.

It is to be hoped that Hosain will produce another book, an autobiography, perhaps, or a sequel to her novel. In the meantime the re-publishing of her small but sparkling oeuvre reclaims for another generation a uniquely distinguished artist.

AAMER HUSSEIN
London

On art and the human spirit

Art, Dialogue and Outrage

Wole Soyinka

Ibadan, Nigeria: New Horn Press (global distribution outside the USA by Hans Zell Associates, Oxford). 1988. 342pp. £29.95hb

One of the reasons why so many critics and readers are afraid of Wole Soyinka is that he challenges language and perception on the highest levels. It may be one of the secrets of his consistency that he has long been committed to the embodiment of a myth, he has seen it through its cycles of despair; he, too, like his patron god Ogun, keeps on daring transition and emerges on the other side renewed in the optimism of action. An aspect of creative brilliance, which is not much celebrated, is fearless engagement and confrontation. Artists, amongst other things, are warriors. The quality and intensity of their production is directly related to how much they are prepared to take on. The eighteen essays in Soyinka's *Art, Dialogue and Outrage* are confrontations raised to the pitch of a fourth dimension. It is not surprising that his patron god is god of war, creativity and exploration, and 'Custodian of the sacred Oath'.

The central preoccupation in these essays would appear to be the formulation of authentic modes of African aesthetics; but this proves to be one wheel within several others. From studies on African theatrical traditions, to postulations on the origins of Yoruba tragedy, examinations of Aristophanes and Shakespeare, views on art and social liberation, through to assaults on genocidal notions about poetry, these essays cover wide terrains of identity and struggle in the definitions of man in society. They chart the necessities of African self-retrieval, with the accent firmly on the need to widen the debate, to keep alive the eclectic adaptability of the African spirit, to shore its own metaphoric and cultural wholeness against the depredations of history and brain-washing.

Soyinka speaks always from a height: he is the prime model of the artist in a post-colonial society. He knows that the African universe is one which can absorb the latest fact of technology and still be itself. He sees all religion as superstition. He knows that a balanced identity builds its basis first on its own cultural structures, its own internal coherence. His formulation of the African future is one in which Africans meet the world on their own spiritual terms.

His essay, 'The Fourth Stage', an examination of the mysteries of Ogun and 'the origin of Yoruba tragedy', is a masterwork of aesthetic postulation. He links Ogun with Dionysos, points out crucial departures which make Yoruba tragedy even more numinous, and then he goes a step further than Nietzsche:

We approach, it seems, the ultimate pessimism of existence as pronounced by Nietzsche's sage Silenus: it is an act of hubris to be born. It is a challenge to the jealous chthonic powers, to *be*. The answer of the Yoruba to this is just as clear: it is no less an act of hubris to die. And the whirlpool of transition requires both hubristic complements as catalysts to its continuous regeneration . . . To dare transition is the ultimate test of the human spirit . . .

This essay contains codes explosive in their potential for transformation on all levels; it stands with the best that has been written on art and the human spirit by myth-formulators in literature.

This volume is not just about African self-apprehension. Soyinka writes with equal intensity about mores of social liberation, about the role of the critic in society, and he has an invaluable lecture on the need for defining the sociology of the critic in order to understand better the basis of their pronouncements on works of art. His essay 'Shake-

Shakespeare and the living dramatist', in which he examines, in a tone of mock-seriousness, the claims of Shakespeare's being an Arab with the real name of Shayk al-Subair, is nothing short of wonderful: it subjects the bard to unusual rays of Egyptian spectroscopic analysis, using *Antony and Cleopatra* as a focus.

The third part of the book deals with replies to critics. He attacks moronic notions from certain critics that African poetry must be simple. He completely flattens another European critic by the name of Hunt for the veins of racism which run deep in his dismissal of the African past. He asserts that the extreme leftist critics in Nigeria have been committing literary infanticide in the heavy-handed manner in which they legislate about what writers should write, what directions they should take. He says there is more criticism than creativity at the moment. It is a sign of the urgency of social problems in Africa that the writer is made to bear so many crosses.

This book, the first of two volumes, is rich in perceptual energy, anecdotes, wit, humanity, and self-revelations. Soyinka could be a clearer writer; he deprives us of a great deal of wisdom with the fury of his complexities. Once the code has been broken, too much intellectual rigour can lead to hasty and lazy reading. A shame, because this volume alone contains some of the best in African or international criticism. It is loaded with intellectual vitamin, highly oxygenated. In speaking above the din of clashing voices, Soyinka, a titan, is helping to turn the tide of African literature which could enable the continent to enter a fifth stage, the stage of self-repletion, mastery, world-confrontation, serenity.

JEN OKRI

London

Invitation to dissent

Voices of Negritude

Julio Finn

London: Quartet, 1988. 246pp. £14.95hb

The publishers describe this book as a scholarly and polemical work on an unjustly neglected subject. The latter claim is rather surprising in view of the fact that Negritude has preoccupied critics and given rise to widespread debate virtually since its inception, and continues to do so, even though its main exponents, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, are now getting on in years and the circumstances which caused them to launch the word and in major respects the idea have long since receded. If the book is scholarly, it shows little sense of the historical dimension of Negritude, and it is lacking in scholarship in other ways as well: references for quotations may or may not be provided, in a somewhat arbitrary way, there is no bibliography, and the book proceeds largely by assertion rather than by argument based on examination of the evidence. In his sense the publishers are right to describe the book as polemical, especially as the author has little if any time for critics who are, or seem to be, critical of Negritude or the writers he discusses. The author's design is polemical in that he comes to praise Negritude, not to bury it – which is what many have in recent years been inclined to

do. For Julio Finn, Negritude lives on, not as a literary movement, but as a vindication of the black man's humanity in the face of the white man's racism, whether it takes the oblique form of cultural domination or the overt form of social and physical violence; one of the most striking images brought to the reader in this book is the lynching of the black American adolescent, Emmet Till.

In fact, *Voices of Negritude*, as indeed its title suggests, is not a scholarly work, nor is it really a polemical one. It is essentially a celebration of black creativity and protest through the medium of poetry in the face of white racism, as expressed chiefly in slavery, colonialism and the rejection of equality. The paradox is that in combining celebration with polemic the author effectively corrupts the simplicity of the celebratory vision and invites dissent. Celebration itself is beyond the reach of the critic and it has no historical dimension even though it grows out of history, but polemic is rooted in history and is most certainly not beyond the reach of the critic.

It is right that Negritude should be celebrated. As history takes hold of it, so its shortcomings as perceived now by the black world are inclined to take over, and the very significant achievements of the movement both as a political and as an aesthetic force tend to be forgotten. There can be little doubt that the extraordinary response generated by the poetry of the Negritude writers of the 1940s and 1950s enabled literature to play a major role in raising awareness, not only in the black world but also in the white world at which much of its attack was directed.

The reader of Finn's book finds the way in via its polemical elements and is involved therefore almost inevitably with the issues and problems that have dogged Negritude since its inception: the questions of definition, of the relationship between Negritude and European culture, of the role of the white critic, of the movement's ultimate relevance, along with related themes of the image of Africa and of woman in black poetry. Brushing aside the problems and arguments, Finn has a great deal to say about all these matters. He also comments on the quality of the poetry and provides a number of translations of his own, some brought together in a short anthology at the end of the book.

Finn quite correctly sees Negritude as a political rather than as a literary movement, and his approach to the work he examines is based on this principle. The vast bulk of the poetry that Finn tells us about is essentially poetry of protest, and in its invariable simplicity of language, structure and means, the polemical message comes through very clearly. This is perfectly in keeping with an artistic sense also to be found in this poetry which gives it its power to communicate emotion. Perhaps the most successful of the poets in this category is Léon Gontran Damas, whose command of the artistic medium of satire never fails to have the same powerful impact on the reader. But the position is not so clear with writers like Senghor and Césaire whose command of language and whose aesthetic awareness is such that for them poetry must inevitably go beyond polemic or even straightforward message. Some of Senghor's finest poems are love poems and Césaire's most outstanding poetry is so obsessed with language for itself that the message can only be reached with the greatest difficulty. Césaire himself recognised this problem by abandoning poetry late in his career for the theatre, with its more direct impact.

The author's translations within the text and in the short anthology at the end are often very good, in spite of lapses into the prosaic. They are also useful in a book which is aimed at providing a descriptive panorama of black protest poetry in the

major Latin countries of the black world. Ultimately, however, the polemical approach often distorts the value of a message which could have been conveyed entirely through the medium of celebration without losing the allegiance of the informed reader.

CLIVE WAKE

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Colonial legacies: allusion or collusion?

The Web of Tradition: uses of allusion in V S Naipaul's fiction

John Thieme

Hertford, England: Hansib Publications/Aarhus, Denmark: Dangaroo Press. 1987. 224pp. £6.95pb

The Colonial Legacy in Caribbean Literature

Amon Saba Saakana

London: Karnak House. 1987. 128pp. £4.95pb

If a West Indian novel looks to the European tradition, does it confirm a colonial legacy established through education and language, and is it therefore in conflict with the indigenous culture? It is no longer enough to analyse literature emerging from the colonial context as simple imaginative creation, for writing is a discourse containing a code of cultural assumptions and implicit affirmations. The two works reviewed here could hardly be more different in style and approach, but each in its way addresses this common issue.

John Thieme's meticulous study starts from V S Naipaul's profound immersion in the European literary tradition. Naipaul himself has written of his estrangement from his native Trinidad, and the part his English education played in this alienation. He found himself in 'the Third World's third world', cut off from his immediate homeland, from the culture of his Indian ancestors, and in Trinidad found himself held within a palimpsest of cultural experience from Europe and America. It might appear to be a clear case of the negative effects of colonial acculturation.

Looked at in detail, however, Thieme reveals a more complex reality. In the early stories of *Miguel Street* (1959), such local allusions as those to calypso are as important as references to Western literature, and the latter are used in a complex way: for example the poet 'B Wordsworth', in the story of that name, transforms his understanding of the English poet into something specifically (and tragically) Caribbean. In the early satirical novels -- such as *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) -- Thieme sees a more direct reliance on a European literary framework of allusion emerging. However, in his excellent examination of *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), Thieme, while tracing the network of deliberate references and parallels with European models, shifts the focus onto the subtexts of Indian culture and belief, and sees the novel as Naipaul's incomplete attempt to 'come to terms with the psychological consequences of his Hindu past'.

Thieme is at his best in his chapter on *The Mimic Men* (1967). In the earlier work,

Thieme is illuminating and accurate, but the analysis only partly confronts the emotional failures and imaginative strengths of Naipaul's genius. The study delivers more than the promised examination of literary allusion, but the probing stops short of the inner quality of the work. Here, examining a novel constructed as a tissue of images and echoes within the mind of Ralph Kripalsingh the narrator, Thieme's approach perfectly fits the subject: he not only brings together earlier research on the novel, he offers new insights.

Thieme's analysis here and his section on *Guerrillas* (1975) gains much from a recognition of Naipaul's debt to Joseph Conrad. Conrad of all writers helped Naipaul cross from a colonial status to the 'Free State' of the modern condition. A debt to Charles Dickens was a debt to British education: a sympathy with Conrad was to share a common experience of a world without bearings. For the later Naipaul the web of literary allusion appropriates not an imposed culture, but the burden of a fragmenting world. Unfortunately the study was completed too early to include Naipaul's latest work, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), which develops this transition further.*

Amon Saba Saakana will have none of this. Naipaul's success in the West (and surely he is at least partly right) has come 'because of the role he has played for white western societies in satirising, ridiculing, and condemning both the Caribbean and Africa as "barren societies"'. The essays that make up his book trace the history of colonial exploitation that makes literary and cultural allusion a collusion with the enemy. For Sakaana even the anti-colonial analysis of C L R James fails to see the positive inheritance of Afro-Caribbean culture. He traces the lesser-known early literary movements in the Caribbean, and the pioneering steps made in the assertion of a Creole culture by such figures as J J Thomas and Marcus Garvey. These developments he sees constantly frustrated by the middle-class consciousness of Caribbean writers, which tied them to metropolitan models, instead of fashioning a new indigenous culture based on the Creole traditions of speech and music. Naipaul is the extreme example of the writer unable to confront the colonialist aggressor and turning the violence in on himself. In a sharply focused account of *The Mimic Men*, he relates Ralph Kripalsingh's political failure to his psychic 'anxiety, stress and . . . inferiority'.

Sakaana is at his best writing cultural polemic. He uses effective and often fresh historical illustrations: as a study of the literature, creative works are used as an illustration of his cultural stance, and the essays lack sustained working through. As Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o notes in his excellent supportive preface, there could be more on the achievement of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, in particular, in reshaping the Caribbean cultural tradition along the lines Sakaana wishes; more needs to be said of Samuel Selvon, Earl Lovelace, to name but two. But the collection is a bracing and uncompromising expression of the anti-colonialist position.

In the end, neither work goes far enough. Thieme's study examines the complex tissue of literary consciousness in surely the most accomplished novelist to have come out of the British Caribbean, and in so doing refutes assumptions that Naipaul's viability within the European novel tradition implies his cultural dependence on this tradition. But the study inevitably underplays the starker issues of cultural hegemony posed by Amon Saakana. Saakana's brief study, in its turn, leaves untouched crucial issues in the cross-cultural conflict, such as the economic factors within writing, reading and publishing. It also simplifies the essentially syncretic complex of the Caribbean experi-

* *The Enigma of Arrival* was reviewed by John Thieme in *Third World Quarterly* 9 (4) October 1987, pp 1376-78.

ence that can be explored without denying what he so vigorously and rightly asserts—the vitality of the indigenous Creole culture.

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In defence of the cosmopolitan

Myself with Others: selected essays

Carlos Fuentes

London: André Deutsch. 1988. 214pp. £10.95hb

The prolific Mexican novelist, Carlos Fuentes, has collected together essays he wrote in English, some of which have appeared before in Spanish. As we discover in the opening essay on his formation as a writer, Fuentes was a diplomat's son, schooled in English, who had to learn to become a Mexican, and write in Spanish. This immersion in foreign cultures heralded Fuentes's defence of cosmopolitanism. He defines his *mexicanidad*: 'Mexico was not an isolated, virginal province but very much part of the human race.' These essays, scattered throughout with lively insights, bear witness to Fuentes's persistent probings of his vital connections with other cultures.

The dedication of his essays to Philip Roth, the US writer, and his wife, Claire Bloom, suggests a fascinating genre that stretches back at least to Henry James's prologues, where practising novelists expound on the state of their art. In *Reading Myself and Others* (1975) Philip Roth interviewed himself and set the record straight about the scandals surrounding work like *Portnoy's Complaint*. In his collection—clearly echoed in Fuentes's title—there is an admiring essay on the exiled Czech writer, Milan Kundera. If there is a presence behind Fuentes's essays it is this same Kundera. Fuentes is not afraid of revealing his passionate admiration for the dead—Honoré de Balzac, Arthur Rimbaud, Pablo Neruda, Alfonso Reyes, among others—as much as for the living, most of whom he calls 'my friends'.

Of these friends it is Kundera—author of the recent *Art of the Novel* (1988), in the same vein as Roth and Fuentes—who supplies the marginal tradition in which Fuentes situates his ambitious defence of the novel. Denis Diderot is fundamental; Fuentes pens a wide-ranging exploration of Diderot's surprising modernity, derived from Kundera. Even Fuentes's reading of Cervantes—another excellent essay—suggests a fertile debt to Kundera.

But Fuentes's personal relationships with other modern, displaced writers, go deeper. Evidently, reading an author is not sufficient; he must be met, talked to, befriended. When Fuentes lists his favourite contemporary writers—Milan Kundera, Italo Calvino, Günter Grass, Juan Goytisolo, Philip Roth, Julio Cortázar, Salman Rushdie and so on—he leaves his readers staring from the street into an expensive restaurant where Fuentes chats with famous friends.

Reading Fuentes is a curious experience of envy, irritation and admiration. The envy arises from our exclusion from his name-dropping social calendar, and the glamour of being a writer. The irritation flaws virtually every page and arises from Fuentes's verbosity, his sweeping generalisations, his sudden shifts from books to films where

June Eyre is as much a Brontë novel as its film adaptation. There is a breathless quality about his prose, a pulpit fluency. I detected misquotations from Arthur Rimbaud, from W B Yeats, from Andy Warhol. Fuentes lives his 'literature' in the same vein as Mario Vargas Llosa who once said that the woman he knew best in his life was Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary.

Yet there remains the admiration. For me this concerns his self-mythologising as a writer from marginalised Mexico, and his defence of the seriousness of the novel, and all art, as the only viable means of 'knowing' because based on desire and imagination. Fuentes's self-belief is a wonderful act of faith in the potentialities of literature. Writing and reading become more than arm-chair acts; they become a 'call to novelistic arms—risk, discovery, a growing perception of an endless reality'. Of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* Fuentes writes: 'Don Quixote does not invite us into "reality" but into an act of the imagination where all things are real,' where this act of the imagination is also an act of freedom, a liberating of desires from the icy grip of ideologies, and rigid conventions. He defines the novel formally as 'uncertainty', a posing of questions: 'How to obtain what we desire?', against the social, political, psychological and purely material obstacles which constantly thwart women and men.

We can read Fuentes, then, as an enthusiast. We might wince at some of his pretensions, at his exclusive club of chums, but we also learn something about writing, reading, criticism, and authors as divergent as Cervantes, Nicolai Gogol, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges and Milan Kundera, as well as a lucid plea for a non-interventionist foreign policy for the USA. Fuentes is not only a novelist whose grand project, *La edad del tiempo* (The age of time) emulates Balzac, but an essayist who engages with his troubled times. He has recently written a foreword to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's collected speeches. His irritating glibness and volubility are the price we pay for sharing his admirations. He forced me, at least, to respect his 'Don't classify me, read me.'

JASON WILSON

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Preaching to the converted

Century of the Wind

Eduardo Galeano.

Translated from the Spanish by Cedric Belfrage

New York: Pantheon Books. 1988. 301pp. \$10.95pb

Century of the Wind is the third and final volume of Eduardo Galeano's semi-documentary trilogy,* which must be counted the most ambitious venture of its kind since its poetic predecessor, Pablo Neruda's *Canto General*, appeared in 1950. To read it is a passionate experience, and there is no doubt of its range, power and importance. Despite the magnitude of the undertaking, however, and one's inevitable admiration both

* *Genesis*, volume I of *Memory of Fire* was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (1) January 1988, pp 320-1; *Faces and Masks*, volume II, was reviewed in *TWQ* 10 (2) April 1988, pp 988-90

for the achievement and the motivation behind it, this reader found himself shaking his head more often than nodding as he followed Galeano through Latin America's turbulent modern history.

The book is a kind of anthology of events, personalities, themes and ideas thought important and representative by a left-wing Latin American towards the end of the twentieth century. He has selected issues from his vast reading of the continent's historical and cultural documents, and has filtered and smoothed them into a unified revolutionary discourse which makes its way by threading together—often with great subtlety—hundreds of intensely vivid vignettes. One's anxieties about the exercise would take many pages to set out in an adequate form but derive partly from Galeano's familiar populist stance, whose anachronism is sometimes embarrassingly obvious, and partly from his apparent confusion of objectives, which is evident from the preface:

It is not an anthology but a literary creation, based on solid documentation but moving with complete freedom. The author does not know to what literary form the book belongs: narrative, essay, epic poem, chronicle, testimony . . . Perhaps it belongs to all or none. The author relates what has happened, the history of America, and above all, the history of Latin America; and he has sought to do it in such a way that the reader should feel what has happened happens again when the author tells it.

It would be difficult to imagine a more unsatisfactory introduction to such a work at any time, but in an era when right-wing discourse reigns supreme, the revolutionary left should surely be clearer about its approach to historical truth, texts and discourses than this.

Not that the task was ever an easy one. Setting aside the always debatable criteria for inclusion and exclusion, in this volume Galeano has had to come to a decision about the moral status of a very large number of major Latin American figures of the past century and to find some dramatic and unexpected angle, of fact or of rhetoric, on each of them. This he does with remarkable ingenuity, but although he is eloquent and inventive, both in detail and as a whole, he eliminates all real complexity and what we are actually given is a gallery of heroes and villains, with very few contradictions and very few nuances (Perón and Evita good, Franklin D Roosevelt bad, and so on). Interpretations are constantly narrated as though they were generally accepted facts, and 'the people' are always right even when they are mistaken, and are always left even when they have been exterminated. By the time several hundred of these brief scenes have flashed by in the guise of answers the informed reader may find his or her mind reeling with several hundred questions, which was clearly not Galeano's intention. To put it bluntly, his vision is much closer to literature than to history, and closer to myth than to either. Yet although the trilogy is really in the tradition of Diégo Rivera's multitudinous murals, Neruda's monumental *Canto* or Fernando Solanas' blockbusting *Hour of the Furnaces* (1968), Galeano makes much more direct claims to historical objectivity whilst offering many more hostages to posterity than his artistic predecessors. Moreover, I felt that his posture was that of one preaching to the converted in time of war. As a long-standing member of the converted I believe that there is even more bad news from the battle zone than he is prepared to admit, and his failure to tell it left me feeling strangely downhearted when I ought, with a more dialectical presentation, to have been feeling, despite everything, inspired. Instead, it was as if we were a handful of lonely survivors singing that the people united will never be defeated down the long empty avenues of history.

Should I be reacting like this? Have I forgotten where I am, where we are? As an exercise in winning hearts, the book's glowing reception, even in the English-speaking

world, would suggest that for the moment it has brought Latin America and its history to a wider audience even more successfully than Galeano's brilliant historical essay, *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971). However, as a long-term political project to secure minds, I feel much more sceptical about the endeavour. It is painful to say this, but the testimonial task which this admirable writer set himself is so important that he of all people really should have done it better.

GERALD MARTIN

Portsmouth Polytechnic

Pervasive politics

Curfew

José Donoso

Translated from the Spanish by Alfred Macadam

New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 1988. 310pp. \$18.95hb

Last Waltz in Santiago: and other poems of exile and disappearance

Ariel Dorfman

Translated from the Spanish by Edith Grossman with the author

New York: Viking Penguin. 1988. 78pp. \$8.95pb

'Everything in Chile is about politics,' reflects one of the characters in José Donoso's *Curfew*. And it is true. Politics in Chile permeates everyday life with a strength that is lacking in other Latin American countries. Perhaps that is what a lengthy period of democratic government, followed by dictatorship, does to the citizens of a nation. Yet that, without doubt, would be an erroneous assumption. If such elusive notions as 'national character' have any basis in reality, then the Chilean national character could best be summed up in the phrase *homo politicus*. And it is *homo politicus* which is the subject of both Ariel Dorfman's *Last Waltz in Santiago* and Donoso's *Curfew*.

Both authors deal in a masterly fashion with the complexities of a *homo politicus* who for the past fifteen years has been impeded from fully developing his true self. Dorfman through poetry and Donoso through the novel are able to capture—with an insight bordering on the magical and the super-human—what these last fifteen years have done to the soul and the body of *homo politicus chilensis*. Barbarism does things to the soul; things that the soul does not comprehend and which force it to make sense of a shattered world. One of the forms taken by that process of 'making sense' is literature and culture. In Chile, Dorfman and Donoso are just two powerful voices among the thousands that have spoken out amid the darkness. They are not powerful merely because they command an international audience. Both are well-established and successful writers, whose power comes from a capacity to convey that sense of impotence which is, in the end, the most characteristic aspect of all the dark ages which humanity has had to endure.

Behind the so-called 'economic miracle' which, some say, Chile is now experiencing, are many dead voices. We may never know how many died, or simply disappeared.

after the coup of 1973. Those people had voices; their wives, husbands, children, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends have voices. What is common to them all is the overwhelming sense of impotence—the impotence of realising that it is pointless having a voice if you cannot be heard. Dorfman and Donoso restore life to those voices, and they do it very well indeed.

But as well as impotence, these two books are about hope, the last resort of those unfortunates who have nothing else. Donoso's *Curfew* is a kind of adult love story involving two beings who could only have emerged as characters after the 1973 coup. It is also an extremely thorough study of those Chileans who, through force of circumstance, have been thrown unwillingly into the political arena and condemned to play a minor, secondary role. Part of Donoso's talent is to make them both interesting and credible. Manungo Vera is the reluctant self-exile; Judit Torre the perpetual revolutionary who, after the events of 1973, sees her life and mission fundamentally changed. It is then a question of picking up the pieces and engaging in the never-ending process of denying herself the right to discover what life might be about. The novel is centred on a twenty-four-hour period, a day and a night, which are packed with events to defy the most fertile imagination. The characters have been thrown together in mourning the death of Matilde Neruda, widow of the poet Pablo Neruda, and it is at her wake that Manungo and Judit find each other. As in all good novels, both protagonists and secondary characters travel comfortably between extremes of mediocrity and heroism; simplicity and the depths of complexity; enormous generosity and utter meanness. Donoso, wonderful story-teller that he is, endows them with life, and that is perhaps the best reason for recommending this novel.

Dorfman's labours, on the other hand, have given us a different voice. It is by all accounts a painful and desperate one; a voice that demands at times revenge and at others simply to know, but above all to make sense. These voices seem to scream, to howl and to cry out for a credible explanation. If we are meant to love each other, can murder and torture be possible? And if we did nothing wrong, do we deserve this awful fate? As life proves time and again, to want good for others does not necessarily mean obtaining it for oneself. Beautiful poetry, made more beautiful still by the simplicity of the cry. The best, in my judgement, of an outstanding selection of poems is this one, perhaps because it shows that even in the depths of the darkest despair there is always hope:

Sun Stone

They put the prisoner
against the wall.
A soldier ties his hands.
His fingers touch him—strong,
gentle, saying goodbye.
—Forgive me, compañero—
says the voice in a whisper.
The echo of his voice
and of
those fingers on his arm
fills his body with light
I tell you his body fills with light
and he almost does not hear
the sound of the shots.

MARIA ALICIA FERRERA-PENA
BBC Latin American Service, London

Poetry to disturb

Woman who has Sprouted Wings: poems by contemporary Latin American women poets

Edited by Mary Crow

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Latin American Literary Review Press. 1987. 205pp. n/p

The Renewal of the Vision: voices of Latin American women poets 1940-1980

Edited by Marjorie Agosin and Cola Franzen

Peterborough, England: Spectacular Diseases. 1987. 109pp. £2.25pb

The growing interest in Latin American women's writing in recent years has not been matched by translations of the large number of important poets. Novelists are slowly but certainly beginning to appear in English, but the poetry lags far behind. It is therefore a refreshing and much needed change to see the appearance of two books of Latin American poetry.

Mary Crow's volume, *Woman who has Sprouted Wings*, now in its second edition, gives both the English and the Spanish original. It also contains a brief biographical statement about each of the writers and is therefore very useful for anyone teaching a course and requiring both the Spanish and English versions. Marjorie Agosin and Cola Franzen's collection, *The Renewal of the Vision*, is on the other hand entirely in English and is therefore a useful book for a monolingual reader who wants to acquire an introduction to Latin American women's poetry. Their book is organised alphabetically whilst Mary Crow's book is grouped according to the country of origin of the individual writers, so, for example, Brazil is represented by Renata Pallottini and Adelia Prado and Cuba by Rita Geada and Nancy Morejon.

Reading through both anthologies, certain dominant themes and techniques emerge. It is not just because both these paperback anthologies are quite small nor because of editorial selection that so many of the poems are short. The smallness of much poetry by Latin American women is a formal feature that cannot be ignored. So too is the insistence on the word 'silence' and on images of exile and loneliness. Many of the writers return again and again to the idea of exile; exile not only from a homeland but a spiritual exile. This is a theme that was developed early in the twentieth century in the work of a number of other Latin American women poets and especially Gabriella Mistral, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945.

Mary Crow's anthology contains a brief and useful historical introduction to Latin American women's poetry. The themes of loneliness and exile are often presented in many of these poems through striking images. The impact of surrealism on Latin American poets and on women poets particularly is a very strong one and many of the writers in both anthologies bear witness to this.

The poems also disturb. Two years ago when the collection of Latin American women's short stories, *Other Fires* (1986),* was published, that volume also disturbed,

* Alberto Manguel (ed) *Other Fires* was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 9 (4) October 1987, pp 1390-95.

in showing the preoccupation of many writers with violence. Many of these poems show the same preoccupation. The traditional idealised image of the Latin American woman as the silent helper, the mother, the image of tranquility, is firmly demolished by many of these writers, who write out their uneasiness, their political involvement and above all their rage. Since the late 1960s, women's movements throughout the world have generated a large amount of excellent poetry. In Latin America where organised women's movements as such have barely got off the ground, a similar phenomenon has nevertheless been taking place. These anthologies of writers, many of whom have not previously been read in English at all, show an energy and a commitment to the craft of poetry that cannot be ignored. Mary Crow's anthology which gives us the Spanish texts alongside is particularly useful because it enables readers to have some idea of the crafting of the original works.

SUSAN BASSNETT
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From Texas to Tierra del Fuego: the view from Mount Olympus

John King of the University of Warwick replies to Norman Thomas di Giovanni's review of his edited book, Modern Latin American Fiction: a survey (1987). The review appeared in Third World Quarterly 10 (4) October 1988.

Norman Thomas di Giovanni makes it quite clear in his review that he does not like academic critics. Academics, it seems, take all the fun out of literature, they dissect, use big ugly words and generally spoil 'this healthy exuberant body of writing' that is Latin American fiction. Of the nineteen essays I included, five are contributed by Latin American writers. These make 'the book come to life'.

Not mentioned in the review, however, is that the article by Augusto Roa Bastos is very densely written—no concessions here to the general reader, no easy word-play à la Guillermo Cabrera Infante. Nothing much else can be salvaged. Gerald Martin receives the seal of approval; I write well, but have nothing to say; Jason Wilson can conduct an interview, so presumably he can also write. The rest are dismissed, with breathtaking arrogance, as 'less than useless', as 'US hacks' or 'European ideologists'. For the record, I included three 'US hacks', Randal Johnson, Charles Perrone and Stephanie Merrim (misspelt by the reviewer in his eagerness to censor her Freudian analysis of Puig) and ten British 'ideologists' (though quite what ideology they share is beyond me): myself, Edwin Williamson, Gordon Brotherston, Susan Bassnett, William Rowe, Michael Wood, Jason Wilson, Gerald Martin, Steven Boldy and John Gledson. All these I judged to have written clearly, intelligently, and usefully on their subject. It is the oldest trick in the book to quote one or two *recherché* phrases out of context and say that they are representative of hundreds of pages (yes, the book is good value for money) of academic hogwash. Let the readers judge for themselves.

It might be useful to debate with the reviewer what he considers to be the function of literary criticism, but he offers me nothing of substance, just Olympian disdain, from a self-created Olympus populated by certain writers and a few good translators such as

himself. (Most of his fellow workers in the field are rubbished, since they produce translations that are 'hideously leaden', 'unintelligible' or in 'unreadable pidgin'.)

We are left with a theoretical problem: what are we all doing? On points of substance, my disagreements are too many to list in the short space granted my reply. Here are a few. I stated clearly in my introduction that I was not attempting a comprehensive history of Latin American culture, which the reviewer seemed to want. I aimed to produce a guide to the major writers that were at the time (1986) readily available in English-language editions. For that reason I reluctantly omitted such writers as Adolfo Bioy Casares, Ernesto Sábato, Mario Benedetti and Juan Carlos Onetti, though I am glad to say that in the next couple of years some of their work will be in distribution in English. The writers I included have been analysed in their social and cultural context and certain themes that are seen as crucial omissions in the review have been covered (for the problem of bilinguality or transculturation see Brotherston or Roa Bastos, or for the term 'magical realism', see Williamson's exemplary essay). I disagree with the 'cultural yardsticks' the review offers for our guidance. A future English-language reader of Sábato will be faced with many more basic problems than the fact that when one of his novels first appears in Spain, it has to carry a special glossary. Other 'yardsticks' are warped. I am sorry that the reviewer cannot find Uruguayan novels in Mexico. I bought several a few months ago in the Gandhi bookshop. It was one of the achievements of the so-called 'boom' of Latin American fiction that writers from different countries, which had previously little contact, reached for the first time a wide Latin American audience.

It seems a pity that singled out for particular scorn is Susan Bassnett's survey essay on women writers. The essay is self-confessedly schematic, but it has a number of interesting insights into a vast field of study which is only just beginning to be mapped. A reviewer should perhaps read more feminist writing before stating that the problem for Latin American women is almost exclusively one of class. They should read Victoria Ocampo more carefully before trotting out the old defensive male argument that she is a bad writer. I am aware that she founded a magazine *Sur* in 1931 (not 1930), since I have written a book on the subject. They should also be careful when stating that Silvina Ocampo has been 'universally recognised for over half a century in her native Argentina'. She has certainly been published for that long, but she remained within a small circle of readers for many years, like her husband, Bioy, and close friend, Borges, and did not achieve the major star status of Borges in the 1960s and minor star status of Bioy in the 1970s. The first volume of short stories translated into English (by Dan Balderston) has appeared only this year, some twenty years after the reviewer must have met her for the first time. I should perhaps end with a fitting paradox from Borges, the master of the lapidary put-down but then, that is the second oldest trick in the book.

FEATURE REVIEWS

State, society and the African crisis

Chris Allen

The African State in Transition

Edited by Zaki Ergas

London: Macmillan. 1987. 340pp. £29.50hb

The Precarious Balance: state and society in Africa

Edited by Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan

Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. 1988. 357pp. £27.95hb

Africa: what can be done?

Ben Turok

London: Zed Press. 1987. 181pp. £23.95hb/£6.95pb

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Africa

Nzongola-Ntalaja

London: Zed Press. 1987. 130pp. £23.95hb/£6.95pb

Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa

Edited by Peter Anyang' Nyong'o

London: Zed Press/Tokyo: United Nations University. 1987. 288pp. £28.95hb/
£9.95pb

For nearly a decade the 'African crisis' has been the central concern of African scholars, Africanists outside the continent and policy-makers. Since the crisis seemed most obviously to be economic and environmental, it was these areas that first commanded attention. To the extent that a political crisis was seen at all—and the casual assumption by the Berg Report and others that African governments could cope with implementing structural adjustment shows how little it was—it was largely understood as just another downward slip on a

prolonged and inevitable descent since independence. Expatriate Africanists in particular were all too fond of consigning Africa to 'basket case' status and even evinced a touch of grim satisfaction that earlier predictions of failure had been confirmed.

The impact of economic decline, external pressures and internal conflict on African political systems is now taken more seriously, as the five volumes under review make clear. All try to characterise the African state, to establish the causes of its current condition and nature, and to predict or propose a future. They range from the best of African scholarship to the best from the USA and from conservative to Marxist stances. Most are essential reading.

The African State in Transition had its origin in a seminar series and a conference. It relies entirely on scholars based in the USA and includes many of the most influential, including René Lemarchand, Thomas Callaghy, Donald Rothchild and Robert Bates. Their essays fit well together and explore many of the most important analytical and theoretical issues associated with the African state, providing statements of the authors' positions and careful surveys of current debate. Thus the book is an excellent introduction to the US field as it stood in the mid-1980s, and should find a central place in most course reading lists.

Three of the chapters set out features of the economic and policy context: Carol Lancaster on debt and structural adjustment, Robert Bates on agricultural pricing, and Robert Curry on basic human needs as a policy goal. These have little to say on the nature or analysis of the African state itself, and function more as background material. Two others take up specialised political themes. Claude Welch discusses the military, mainly by examining demilitarisation in Nigeria, and ends a rather banal piece by predicting more intervention. Marina Ottaway covers the crisis of Africa's socialist states, which she sees as 'rooted in the uncertain nature of the relation between state and society and in the ultimate failure of a socialist state to emerge in most countries calling themselves socialist' (a judgement echoed in more explicitly class terms by Nzongola-Ntalaja in his own book). Thus it is features of the African state in general, and especially its lack of purchase on civil society, rather than socialism itself (or external intervention) that undermines socialist experiments—except perhaps, she argues, in Ethiopia, a conclusion that would astonish the contributors to Peter Anyang' Nyong'o's collection.

The remaining chapters in the Ergas collection are a set of six linked theoretical essays covering the interaction of class formation and the state (Nelson Kasfir), the role of ideology (Harvey Glickman), patrimonialism and factionalism (Thomas Callaghy, René Lemarchand) and the definition and nature of the state (Otwin Marenin, Donald Rothchild). While they are not always talking about the same entity or concept, and 'state' may refer to political system, government or administration at different times, they do share a

common perception of what the African state has become. In Marenin's words, it is 'extensive, fragile, prebendal and elitist'—as well as weak, unable to function as a state should and 'limited in its control over society' (Rothchild). There is not much disagreement among these essays, or the Ergas Introduction, on why the state has this character. While external circumstances and pressures are relevant, it is patrimonialism (or for Ergas 'pathological patrimonialism') that diverts the resources, energy, capacity and political will of African states away from the tasks of development and democratisation into the enrichment of a rapacious horde of venal officials.

Several of the contributors to the Ergas volume reappear in *The Precarious Balance: state and society in Africa*, and essentially similar conclusions are reached: the African state, says Chazan in her concluding overview, is overblown, overcentralised, patrimonial, elitist, personalist and authoritarian; and it is 'weak yet exploitative'. The Ergas collection, however, is rather narrowly conceived and represents (very well) the thinking of but one major tendency in US African studies. That of Rothchild and Chazan—again the product of a mid-1980s conference—offers a broader perspective. Its authors include both Africans and radicals, engaging with each other (and with the editors, who do an excellent job). Thus there is a sense of debate and argument, of a subject in development, and a wider range of conclusions and themes than with Ergas. This is the more exciting book, and the one to acquire if one has to make a choice.

It does not, unlike the Ergas volume, take the state as the centre of enquiry, and then introduce society as something impinging on or even overwhelming the state. Rather it treats society as of equal importance and the interaction between it and the state as involving the 'precarious balance' of the title. Thus social variables play a greater part in analysis, notably class, gender and 'disengagement'. Kwame Ninsin, while sharing the perception that the decay of African states is rooted in predatory and abusive behaviour towards their citizens, sees this in turn not as a feature of leadership or institutional failure, but as the outcome of the formation and nature of classes in African society. Ninsin's contribution is somewhat too abstract and condensed, but it does allow him to offer a forceful critique of the notion of 'disengagement' on which several other contributions rest. In an introductory section Victor Azarya argues that 'relatively little attention has been paid to how societies cope with the state rather than how the state acts upon the society'. Political anthropologists, labour historians and students of peasant activity (among others) may be somewhat bewildered by this claim, but they will recognise immediately Azarya's main categories of coping: incorporation and disengagement. The latter he defines as 'the tendency to withdraw from the state and keep at a distance from its channels as a hedge against its instability and dwindling resource base'. The concept offers both an explanation of state decay and the possibility of a common understanding of a very wide range of activity

as ordered responses to the state, and as political activity. One key category of such activity is the 'second economy', here treated as very little more than a reworking of the informal sector of the early 1970s literature and still with all its theoretical weaknesses (on which Ninsin seizes). Another is women's activity: having been for so long shunned by political scientists, the history of women's organisations, consciousness and action appears to offer a rich case study of disengagement. To their credit Rothchild and Chazan, unlike the other books under review, take women seriously and include a piece by June Parpart in which she summarises all too briefly the scattered literature on women's political participation and their relationship with the state.

Disengagement has its problems, too, which both Azarya and Chazan point out at some length. Thus the same phenomenon can as readily be a response to the growth of state control as it is to its decline, and thus ambiguity makes identifying disengagement difficult. Equally, the variety of activity that might come under the heading of withdrawal from the state is so great that it is doubtful that a single phenomenon is being studied. This perhaps accounts for the relatively modest discussion of political as opposed to economic activity in Chazan's essay on 'patterns of state-society incorporation and disengagement'. Ninsin identifies a third problem, in arguing that the separation of state and society may not amount to disengagement by social groups but rather to an act by the state, a deliberate 'delinking' of certain social strata. In this they remain open to exploitation 'by people in positions of undisputed political and economic advantage' but unable to turn to the state for protection or redress. For Ninsin, then, disengagement strengthens rather than weakens the state, just as the informal sector protects the rich rather than the poor.

The discussions of disengagement in the Rothchild and Chazan volume not only analyse the withdrawal of society from the state; they tend to celebrate it as a watershed in African politics and as a welcome trend, a reversal of the 'uncontrolled statist experiments of the first 25 years of independence' (Chazan). Together with the oddly apolitical discussion of the fine detail of disengagement, this encourages a conservative, even depoliticised, view of politics. Such a view pervades both books, representative as the bulk of their authors are of a pluralist/modernisation paradigm. It is reflected in their pessimistic views of the future, and their disinclination to discuss a third response by society to the state: not embracing or spurning it, but remaking it. As their titles make clear, the three Zed Press volumes under review focus on this transformative response, asserting both the commitment of the 'popular classes' to democracy and the impossibility of development without it. They also represent a different paradigm—Marxism—and a different context, those of engaged African authors writing (usually) from Africa.

Of the three, Turok's is the most explicitly directed at political activists rather than academics. It is also, though not for that reason, the weakest. Dated and uneven material, poorly supported arguments and analysis, and

lazy or inconsistent use of concepts make this a text of little help to activists and little interest to students and scholars. It is perplexing to see the founder and director of the excellent Institute for African Alternatives, that has done so much to foster and disseminate the best of African radical scholarship, producing so disappointing a book.

Like Turok, the Zairean exile, Nzongola-Ntalaja, seeks to explain why the libertory promise of the decolonisation struggle has not been fulfilled, what form of class rule and state now exists, and how it may be transformed in the linked interests of democratisation and development. His short book consists largely of reprinted pieces including a case study of the 'second independence movement' in Zaire, and lesser pieces on Amílcar Cabral, the political role of intellectuals, and the history of African studies (which like the rest of his work shows a wide reading and generous appreciation). The key chapters cover the national questions, defending the rights of 'oppressed minorities' within their own states, and the 'crisis of the African state'. This last is the only new piece, and makes very similar arguments to those of the Ghanaian, Kwame Ninsin, in Rothchild and Chazan: 'the crisis of the state in post-colonial Africa is a function of its nature as an authoritarian control structure preoccupied with the political survival and material interests of those who control it'. Like Ninsin he robustly defends the application of class analysis to African politics, though it remains open to question whether the predatory and abusive behaviour of the Zairean or Ghanaian holders of power really amounts to the realisation of class as opposed to individual interests. Going beyond Ninsin, he argues that the African state 'must be smashed and replaced by a people's state', though his discussion of this is limited to a case study of resistance to the Zairean state in 1963-68.

This case study also appears in Peter Anyang' Nyong'o's collection, among several other country studies on Morocco, Uganda, Congo, South Africa, Ghana, Liberia, Kenya and Swaziland. By way of introduction there is a preface by Samir Amin, an editorial introduction, and a general essay by Harry Goulbourne, which set out the need for participatory democracy as an essential precondition for development. The quality of the essays is high, especially considering the conditions under which many had to be conceived and written. Since, however, they largely record the defeat of popular struggles, they tell us about the defects of the contemporary African state and the springs of mass discontent, rather than helping us understand what forms a democratic African state and a democratic process of development can or must take. Two other features weaken what remains a valuable collection. Case studies of socialist states and their problems would have made for a fuller account of the nature of popular alliances as a democratic force and of the pitfalls of democratic struggles, notably alliances with the military. More important in both analytical and political terms is the narrow conception of democratic forces that pervades the collection. Only two authors—Mamdani and Wamba-dia-

Wamba—consider the peasantry as part of the democratic forces; the rest consider only the urban poor and urban intellectuals. Among these town dwellers they also consider only men, yet any examination of earlier democratic struggles shows that the more radical a movement and the more committed to democratisation of the political system, the more important the presence of women within it and the more significant a role it accorded to women. It would be a curious—and doomed—democratic struggle that ignored such crucial allies.

Roots of the *intifadah*: Zionist policy in Palestine

Yezid Sayigh

The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949

Benny Morris

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 380pp. £30.00hb

Creating Facts: Israel, Palestinians and the West Bank

Geoffrey Aronson

Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies. 1987. 334pp. \$24.95hb

Blaming the Victims: spurious scholarship and the Palestinian question

Edited by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens

London/New York: Verso. 1988. 296pp. £24.95hb/£8.95pb

The continuing Palestinian *intifadah* (uprising) in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip has forced three questions on the international community: how did the problem come about originally; how has Israel dealt with the Arab population under military occupation; and how was it possible to obscure the root causes and subsequent reality of the Palestine tragedy from world, and especially Western, attention for so long?

Benny Morris, an Israeli correspondent and researcher, uses recently de

classified private and state archives—including those of the Israeli Army and Military Intelligence—to answer the first of these questions: how and why 60–75 per cent of the whole Palestinian population became refugees in 1948 and remained so following the creation of the State of Israel. Simplified, his answer is that an overwhelming majority fled as a result of direct Zionist attack, forcible expulsion, the fall of neighbouring villages, fear of massacre, and a deliberate ‘whispering’ campaign.

Morris argues, however, that wholesale expulsion was not an official aim of the Zionists—although they welcomed the mass flight that their military activity generated—and that policy towards the Palestinians was more complex, evolving only gradually. An early landmark in this evolution was the exodus from the major cities of Haifa and Tiberias, alerting the Zionist leadership to the immense benefits of such a ‘miraculous’ clearing of the land. The first truce in the Arab–Israeli war of 1948 pushed the issue further, by forcing a decision on whether or not to allow the refugees back to their homes. The response was negative. The connection between creating an exclusively Jewish state and the means to do so—military action leading inevitably to mass exodus of Palestinians—then became conscious in Zionist minds, and all subsequent offensives involved displacement of non-combatants. Further proof of the process came after the war, as the nascent Israeli state completed the expulsion of Palestinian communities in border areas, and continued the razing of Arab villages (Morris names 369) to make way for new Jewish settlers.

Naturally, in every instance the Zionist leadership explained its actions—evicting inhabitants and demolishing homes—in terms of security or continuing military operations rather than a deliberate policy of expulsion, a rationale largely confirmed by Morris. But here he is trapped by his own meticulousness: in studying the documents pertaining to each individual instance, in order to ascertain if expulsion was an explicit aim of that particular operation, he overlooks the wood for the trees. A series of operations with the unplanned (though welcome) result of Palestinian depopulation is thus taken to represent an incidental accumulation rather than the thrust of underlying, unstated policy over time. After all, the idea of ‘transferring’ the Arab population from Palestine was formulated by the principal Zionist leader, Ben Gurion, and others in the 1930s, as Morris himself points out (pp 24–26).

Morris describes, rightly, the disastrous effect of Palestinian shortcomings—political rivalry, lack of organisation, early flight of the local elite—on morale among the Palestinian inhabitants of Haifa in May 1948. Yet, though he mentions it, he underestimates the impact of Zionist action. The Deir Yasin massacre—in which units led by Menahem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir (both later prime ministers of Israel) butchered 256 unarmed civilians—had occurred just a week earlier, and the main wave of refugees fled Haifa after a mortar attack on crowds in the market place. Members of the mainstream Zionist force (Haganah, led by today’s Labour Party) drove through the streets

machine-gunning civilians, and Morris quotes their orders as: 'kill every [adult male] Arab encountered' (p 76). This was before any firm policy of expulsion had taken shape, and worse was to come in the course of 1948: 70 Palestinian prisoners killed in Ein ez-Zeitoun on 1 May; 250 civilians gunned down in the streets of Lydda on 12 July; up to 335 expellees from Ramleh dead of exhaustion, hunger, and aircraft strafing on 12-14 July; close to 100 more massacred in Dawaymah on 29 October, children with skulls crushed by clubs and women raped before being bayoneted. The list goes on, with the 'moderate' Haganah guilty in most cases.

Besides restoring such facts to the historical record, Morris demolishes two favourite myths of post-1948 Israeli propaganda: that the Palestinians fled because their leaders told them to do so, and that they only became homeless after the Arab armies invaded the newly-declared state of Israel on 15 May 1948. First, not only is there a virtual absence of orders to evacuate, but Arab statements often exhorted the inhabitants to stay put; significantly, no villages or towns were abandoned before Zionist attack, only during or after. Secondly, up to half of all Palestinian refugees were forced from their homes *before* 15 May 1948, at a time, moreover, when the British mandate was still in force. As an Israeli scholar, Morris has displayed moral and intellectual courage in producing this work, as well as academic objectivity and scrupulousness. Yet the story will only be complete once the victims speak for themselves: the challenge remains for Palestinian scholars to study the reasons for the collapse and flight of their own society during those fateful months in 1948.

Geoffrey Aronson takes up the story from 1967, when the Zionist movement (in the shape of Israel) seized the remaining part of historic Palestine. Though a few books have offered political histories of the four-sided struggle for influence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (on the part of the PLO, Israel, Jordan, and local leadership), this is the first full-length study of Israeli policy as implemented on the ground in the occupied territories. Aronson sets his account in the context of the major schools of Israeli thought on how to manage the local Arab population and reinforce military control, noting, however, that all were agreed on the ultimate goal of perpetuating Israeli rule and transforming those areas into the historic 'land of Israel'. Early on, the Allon Plan envisaged handing over administrative autonomy within isolated pockets to Arab control, while retaining large swathes of land for military use and Jewish civilian settlement. Moshe Dayan led the 'carrot-and-stick' policy, based on integrating the Palestinian residents into the Israeli economy (but in a subordinate position, and as subjects not citizens) and severely punishing resistance or opposition.

Coming to power in 1977, the Likud Party pursued the 'Greater Israel' theme more openly, seeking quicker and more radical results. Armed Israeli civilians were increasingly encouraged to take matters into their own hand and settlement activity was stepped up, as was the attempt to undermine th

political and economic development of the Palestinians. Yet, as Aronson describes them, the 'Begin Years' merely built on the thrust of Labour Party policy since 1967, the differences being in style far more than in content. Indeed, his account of the internal Israeli debate shows an extraordinary, though hardly surprising, degree of continuity in the ideological and practical foundations of Zionist behaviour in Palestine since 1948. Speaking in 1980, for example, General Aharon Yariv confirmed that Israeli leaders had considered the option of expelling 700,000–800,000 Palestinians in some suitable circumstance such as an Arab–Israeli war. Eight years later another general, Rehavam Ze'evi, calls openly for 'transfer', adding that removing Arabs from Eretz Israel is part of the ideological basis of Zionism: 'if the transfer idea is immoral, then Zionism itself is immoral. All the settlement that has been carried out in the last 100 years was based on the transfer of Arabs' (*Guardian* (London) 6 September 1988).

The continuity does not stop there. When the *intifadah* erupted in late 1987, Western media and governments professed shock at the brutality with which the Israeli army sought to crush the revolt, though they were often quick to accept official explanations that incidents in which unnecessary violence had been employed were 'aberrations'. But Aronson chronicles the measures of control and punishment implemented over twenty years as a matter of systematic policy, which included, for instance, deliberately breaking the bones of 'trouble-makers' and routinely beating curfew-breakers. Whole communities were dragged from their homes at night to stand in the cold, occasionally for days. Homes were demolished and thousands deported or imprisoned. Even when no violence was used, over 1300 Military Orders governed every aspect of Palestinian social and economic activity. Aronson's review of Israeli policy is comprehensive, his construction of the political debate within Israel careful. The uprising of the young Palestinian stone-throwers is but a response to a long process of Israeli efforts to destroy the foundations of autonomous Palestinian society.

How did Israel succeed in obscuring the full extent and nature of its policies from the majority of the world for so long? This is the question that the eleven essays in the volume edited by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens seek to answer, and in doing so they pose a real challenge to the reader. The central theme throughout is the continuous attempt, by Israel and its Western supporters, to obscure or dehumanise the Palestinians in order ultimately to deny their claim to Palestine and to delegitimise their constant resistance to dispossession. Either they are illiterate peasants from other countries, drawn to Palestine in the last century only by the lure of material benefits offered by Zionist development of the land, or else they are terrorists, undeserving of international sympathy.

An entire ideological machine has come into existence to rewrite history and fill the breaches in the wall of denial when the Palestinian voice breaks through.

The myths recur: 'the Palestinians left their homes because they were ordered to do so by their leaders'. But, as Hitchens notes, the real hypocrisy is that 'whatever may have prompted their flight, they had a right to expect to return home after the end of hostilities' (p 73). Gradually, as in the case of 'terrorism' discussed by Said and Noam Chomsky, the USA has joined Israel in the reversing of roles between aggressors and victims. Here, too, is a long, bitter line of continuity: one survivor of the Israeli massacre of Ramleh in 1948 was assassinated in 1988 in the classic Israeli response to the *intifadah* he helped create—this was Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad), the PLO's second foremost leader assassinated in sovereign Tunis by an Israeli hit team. Yet neither incident shook the rejectionism of the US-Israeli ideologues.

Another ideological weapon is marginalisation: Palestinians, like many Third World peoples, have been placed 'outside' history as written by the West. Treated as its passive subjects rather than active participants, their existence and thus their rights as a national community are denied. In response, Rashid Khalidi portrays the Palestinians as real people by writing a neglected chapter of their history, 'Palestinian peasant resistance to Zionism before World War I'. But the most touching expression of their human-ness comes from Morris' book: in their first experience of mortar shelling in 1948, some of the Palestinian inhabitants of Safad thought they were being attacked with atom bombs, due to the great flash and noise made by the Zionist weapons (p 104). This incident encapsulates as well as any other the encounter between Palestine of the Third World and Zionism of the West.

Central America: history and destiny

Ian Roxborough

Forging Peace: the challenge of Central America

Richard Fagen

Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987. 161 pp. £6.95pb

Crisis in Central America: regional dynamics and US policy in the 1980s

Edited by Nora Hamilton, Jeffrey A Frieden, Linda Fuller et al

Boulder, Colorado/London: Westview Press, 1988. 272 pp. £34.00hb

Land, Power, and Poverty: agrarian transformation and political conflict in Central America

Charles D Brockett

Boston/London: Unwin Hyman. 1988. 229pp. £30.00hb

Power in the Isthmus: a political history of modern Central America

James Dunkerley

London: Verso. 1988. 691pp. £29.95hb

War and revolutionary upheaval have in the last decade put Central America on the map. Once an obscure and largely unknown part of the US backyard, this cluster of tiny countries has become a centre of world attention. As the shadow of Vietnam looms over the isthmus, academics and political activists have sought to understand the origins of the present crisis in order to suggest possible solutions. These books, in their different ways, represent the best of recent efforts in this direction.

Both *Forging Peace* and *Crisis in Central America* have emerged from a US-based lobby, Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America (PACCA). The first of these, Richard Fagen's *Forging Peace*, should be read by every policy-maker and citizen concerned with Central America. It is short, lucid, and to the point. It has a powerful and moving foreword by George McGovern which in two short pages presents a cogent liberal case for a dramatic shift in US policy towards Central America. The remaining 130 pages of text provide a straightforward introduction to the dimensions of the problem and a set of proposals for a programme of US assistance to rebuild the war-torn economies of Central America. A sense of the scale of the problem is conveyed in Fagen's comment that, 'since 1980, perhaps 140,000 people ... have died in war-related violence. Casualties of the same proportion in the United States would leave over one million dead' (p 4). PACCA's proposals for peace and reconstruction in Central America are reasonable and coherent. Unfortunately, they require a degree of long-term rationality which is unlikely to be displayed by any US administration. *Crisis in Central America*, edited by Nora Hamilton, Jeffrey Frieden, Linda Muller and Manuel Pastor, is a collection of a dozen papers which continue the same concerns. As is the case with most books of this kind the individual chapters vary in quality, though the overall standard is very high. Like *Forging Peace*, this collection is as much about the USA as it is about Central America, and rightly so. Given the imbalance of power between the Colossus of the North and the fragmented states of Central America, and given the proximity between the two, it is hardly surprising that Washington looms large in any account of politics in Central America. But this is by no means the entire story, as both the PACCA

books are careful to point out, and there is scope for a vision which begins and ends with the Central Americans themselves.

With the books by Brockett and Dunkerley, the focus is much more sharply on the countries of Central America itself. Brockett's book is an attempt to provide an overall framework for understanding the nature of the postwar agrarian transformations of Central America, and the impact these have had on national politics. It brings together the results of a number of empirical studies on the topic and organises them in a relatively simple framework. Brockett's conclusions are sensible and well-founded, and his approach is sufficiently broad to prevent agrarian issues from being presented in isolation from the context that gives them meaning. This means, at times, that *Land, Power, and Poverty* verges on being a general history of Central America, and this is no bad thing. On the whole, it is a highly readable introduction to the agrarian question in the region.

All these books are excellent and important, but James Dunkerley's *Power in the Isthmus* belongs in a different class altogether. It is a massive work, comprising some 660 pages of text and notes. *Power in the Isthmus* is organised in two parts: four chronological chapters chart the historical development of Central American societies from the early nineteenth century onwards, and six country-specific chapters provide a detailed focus on developments in the region in the period from 1950 to the present. A chapter on the economies of Central America links the two sections.

The first impression conveyed by the book is a profound sense that these small countries do, indeed, have real histories.

Dunkerley's aim is twofold: to identify the points of inflection in the historical development of Central America—the problematic of continuity and rupture; and to identify commonalities and differences in the specific historical development of each country—the problematic of unity and diversity. Dunkerley identifies two points of rupture for the contemporary period: the mid-1940s—the years of popular and democratic mobilisation produced by the victories of the Allied armies in the Second World War—and the crisis and insurrectionary period of the years between 1979 and 1982.

Underpinning this major enterprise is a sophisticated theoretical apparatus which draws heavily on Gramsci for many of its conceptual formulations. This is evident in his use of the notion of political modernity and in the care with which the notion of crisis is deployed. Similarly, following the best of modern Marxist work, Dunkerley is concerned to balance a concern for the autonomy of politics with an economically materialist position. On the whole he has got it about right, and has managed to do so without making heavy weather of the theory. Indeed, the theory is implicit in the very structure of the argument. The long waves of export-orientated capitalist development pose problems for the institutionalisation of class control; these problems are susceptible to a variety of solutions, resulting in quite different social struc

ral and political systems in the various countries of the region. Dunkerley is convincing in his account of the development of class forces in each country, and it is this empirical specificity which builds cumulatively to provide the book with its overwhelming impact.

He argues that the reorganisation of the export economies of Central America around cotton at the end of the Second World War was linked with a process of political modernisation whose contours differed significantly from country to country. In all cases, moreover, the postwar years saw the emergence or expansion of a significant class of capitalist entrepreneurs, though once again there were important variations from one country to another. This restructuring of Central America in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War set the parameters for the long period of postwar growth, and the specific forms of politics which emerged in each country. What emerges so early from Dunkerley's book are the vast differences between the political systems of the countries of Central America, and how much these differences owe to the different ways in which the problems and opportunities of the immediate postwar conjuncture were confronted. Costa Rica experienced a civil war and was then able to erect something like a social-democratic welfare state, Nicaragua remained under the tight grip of the Somoza dynasty, Honduras and El Salvador evolved into semi-competitive political systems (though with vastly different levels of modernity and military involvement), and Guatemala embarked on a ten-year experiment in nationalist reform which was overthrown by a US-backed counter-revolution. Together with significant differences in their economic and social structures, these different responses to the immediate postwar conjuncture led to remarkably diverse forms of political evolution for each country.

Yet by the late 1970s the emerging economic crisis and the growth of the left seemed to be bringing each country back into historical step with its neighbours. In the second half of the book, Dunkerley charts the steady descent into war and barbarism with unremitting detail. A new crisis was in the making, one that had both idiosyncratic national origins, and yet was regional in its scope and in its repercussions.

In the series of country-specific chapters Dunkerley does a magnificent job of describing the contours of the class conflicts and political struggles of the postwar period, and the emerging political and economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s. He is particularly good on the left, providing a detailed and precise account of the development of the revolutionary forces in each country, and giving due attention to debates about strategies for attaining political power. His position is one of committed, but critical, support for the revolutionary efforts of the Central American left. He is careful to elucidate (and appreciate) the nationalist (and in Guatemala, the specifically Indian) dimensions of revolutionary struggle. While Dunkerley writes as a committed socialist—indeed he writes passionately—his constant push towards intellectual rigour stops him

from sliding into dogma and facile recipe-mongering. Facing difficult and unpleasant questions head on, he is unafraid to adopt what for some may be an unpalatable stance, most notably, in his conclusion that the specificity of the Nicaraguan situation in the 1970s meant that the Sandinista insurrectionary successes were unlikely to be repeated elsewhere on the isthmus.

The author's thesis that the mid-1940s saw a major turning point in Central American history is powerfully made and plausible. His argument that there was a similar turning point in the few years between 1979 and 1982 is bolder and, while perhaps more widely held, less obvious. The question as to whether Central America confronted such a crisis at the end of the 1970s, and the related question of whether the prospects for further insurrectionary triumphs have now slipped away, are of course the central questions that must be addressed. Once again, Dunkerley operates in a Gramscian mode: his optimism of the will is tempered with a healthy dose of pessimism of the intellect. As he argues, the revolutionary dynamics of El Salvador and of Guatemala were different from those of Nicaragua, and it should be no surprise that events have transpired differently in those countries. He is notably cautious in his assessment of the immediate prospects for the Central American left, though one thing that is clear from a reading of *Power in the Isthmus* is that the social bases of revolutionary action in Central America are both deep-rooted and enduring.

Power in the Isthmus is a densely argued and structurally complex work in which the sheer mass of empirical detail and the author's evident command of the material can threaten to overwhelm the reader. *Power in the Isthmus* is not for beginners: it demands of the reader the same care and critical appraisal that the author has put into every line of his book. The effort is worth it: the combination of a broad scope, empirical detail, and a carefully worked out analytical framework makes this the most serious and sophisticated history of modern Central America in English and possibly also in Spanish. Given the paucity of detailed empirical monographs on the subject, and the limited number of important historiographical interpretations of the area, this is a major accomplishment.

Something should be said about the style of Dunkerley's book. It is written with a sort of baroque elegance, and a sense of irony is seldom far from the surface, though the author has buried his sharpest barbs in his voluminous notes. The hapless Boy Scout leader, José Napoleon Duarte, and the debonair psychopath, Roberto D'Aubuisón, are lampooned unmercifully, and other lesser figures come in for their rightful share of ridicule.

If there is one section that fails at times to meet the impressive standards of the book as a whole, it is the chapter on economics. The fault does not lie with the content of the chapter, but with its style. At times it can be hard going indeed as the reader is bombarded with great masses of statistical material. A shorter and more elegant chapter would have been a distinct improvement.

CENTRAL AMERICA

This is a pity, both because it contrasts with the intellectual force of the rest of the book, and because this chapter on the economies of the region serves as an important bridge between the opening regional historical chapters and the country-specific chapters in the second part. This, however, is a minor quibble.

Power in the Isthmus should be a stimulus to more serious research and debate. Many of Dunkerley's suggestions and interpretations will, no doubt, be shown by subsequent research to be inexact. This is inevitable in such a pioneering enterprise; in no way does it detract from the central point that only now can we shift the debate about the history and destiny of Central America away from short-term responses to US foreign policy towards an attempt to understand the opportunities and constraints which face Central Americans as they attempt to make their own history. It is the mark of a truly major work that it reformulates fundamental questions at an altogether different level.

BOOK REVIEWS

Roots of Jamaican Culture

Mervyn Alleyne

London: Pluto Press. 1988. 186pp. £14.95hb

Politics in Jamaica

Anthony J Payne

London: C Hurst/New York: St Martin's Press. 1988. 196pp. £22.50hb/£6.95pb

The Caribbean in World Politics: cross currents and cleavages

Edited by Jorge Heine and Leslie Manigat

New York: Holmes & Meier. 1988. 385pp. \$29.50hb

Agendas of international politics ebb and flow. From being a priority in Superpower chancelleries the political affairs of the Caribbean have temporarily yielded to those of greater immediacy elsewhere. An opportunity, therefore, to take stock.

The first two books focus on Jamaica, the strategic importance of which is complemented by the intensity of its politics and the cultural dynamism of its diverse peoples. The two works provide through their respective perspectives rich insights into the cultural experiences and societal values of Jamaican society, and the political realities of power structures. The many contradictions—between African, European and North American values, between structural under-development and materialist pressures, to name but two—have led to sharp shifts in economic policy and ideological stance since independence (and periods of debilitating vacillation), making analysis all the more difficult.

The starting point must be the brutal slave-based genesis of Jamaican society. There are three theories of what became of the original culture of those whose forebears were forcibly taken from Africa. The 'culture stripping' school would have it that it was irrevocably lost in the horrors of the Middle Passage, with the mixing of Africans of different socio-linguistic environments, and that slavery and unremitting exposure to British colonialism over three centuries led to European norms becoming pre-eminent. The 'original creation' thesis, on the other hand, argues that in these circumstances a new and distinctive culture emerged. But Mervyn Alleyne in *Roots of Jamaican Culture* holds firmly to the 'continuity' theory whereby Afro-American culture is largely an extension of African culture, although very uneven in application over space and time. He argues persuasively in favour of 'a continuum of variation': structural functionalists, who deny the role of history in shaping the nature of culture, have little, therefore, to contribute.

But history alone did not determine what was culturally 'superior' and 'inferior' and the nature, direction and intensity of cultural change: that derived from political realities, in effect the distribution of power. Alleyne makes clear that power has never been monopolised by imperialism. Jamaicans were never passive objects of history, as the Maroon experience and numerous slave revolts bear witness. An important ethnic factor was the predominance of the Twi (of present day Ashanti in Ghana) in the early days

of slavery. Their creative culture and values and tradition of resistance were impressed upon later arrivals and an inter-African syncretism within a framework of Ashanti dominance developed. Twi religious belief systems, incorporating *obeah* ('black magic' to fearful Europeans), spirit possession and secret societies rooted in esoteric ritual, were potent ingredients. Music, dance and language symbiotically interacted with politics, in the slave era as now. A distinctive Afro-Jamaican English developed and Christian revivalism emerged out of traditional dogma-free religion. Value systems based upon a communalist view of society and spontaneous improvisation are still characteristic of Jamaican society, although the impact of North American individualism and the value of wealth for its own sake is taking its toll.

Rastafarianism is therefore in part a structural ambiguity, in a sense a belated 'original creation', as Africa is an ideological focus rather than a historical point of departure, 'a cultural form created *ab initio* out of social circumstances'. These circumstances are all too apparent: widespread poverty, the yawning income and consumption gap (and class consciousness) between the mostly pale-skinned bourgeoisie and the black lumpenproletariat, and political tribalism where two deeply entrenched and not entirely dissimilar parties struggle, sometimes violently, for popular support.

As Alleyne acknowledges that the 'continuity' thesis becomes meaningless where modern trade unions, political parties and the Westminster system are concerned, he virtually ignores them. But within these institutions leadership style and the nature of mass participation appear to have their ultimate roots in Africa. Tony Payne, meanwhile, does not explore the probable African heritage in Jamaican political behaviour, but rather that of 'culture stripping' British colonialism, in seeking to explain the 'impressive achievement' of a Western-style democratic system. The contrast to Africa is stark. Elections do determine governmental change, despite the system's authoritarian structure, its elite control and clientelist style rooted in patronage and welfare values, and the sustained attempts by the bourgeoisie to sabotage socialist policies aimed at structural change.

For all that Payne's book tends to read like a series of separate essays, there is no doubting that observers of the Jamaican scene will for some time be in his debt. After a brisk introduction, his starting point is the 1968 Rodney riots. Reintroducing the phenomenon of black power into Jamaica after an absence of some fifty years, albeit by then linked to Marxism, the riots marked a watershed in modern Jamaican politics. Thereafter the parties, the right-of-centre Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the leftist/reformist People's National Party (PNP) had to take more account of the aspirations of the masses, especially the materialistic.

This concern for economic well-being led successive governments to experiment with a variety of development models, none of which have worked. In a meticulous analysis Payne surveys and assesses the period of import-substitution industrialisation (the 'Puerto Rican' model centred upon 'industry by invitation') from the 1950s to 1974, the short but dramatic era of 'democratic socialism' based on the populist policies of PNP prime minister, Michael Manley, and the export-led industrial strategy of the JLP government of Edward Seaga. Dating from the JLP's spectacular electoral defeat of the hapless PNP in October 1980, Seaga's strategy relies on cheap labour to supply a preferential US market, access to which is sustained by a very close identification by his government with the policies and ideologies of the Reagan administration.

The contrast with 'democratic socialism', propounded rather incoherently as a 'third

path' between the Puerto Rican and Cuban models, could not be greater, most markedly in foreign policy terms. Manley's logic was impeccable: given Jamaica's notoriously open economy, structural reform was possible only if better deals were made with the international economy. But an adventurist foreign policy and a close relationship with Cuba in general and Fidel Castro in particular served only to antagonise the USA and deepen class polarisation. When recourse to the IMF became inevitable, Manley found himself 'in a no-man's land between rhetoric and reality'. The core of political power remained untouched; it could not be otherwise as 'the fundamental point is that Jamaican politics represent a historical compromise between a capitalist power structure and the exigencies of mass politics'. Like the JLP, the PNP relied on bourgeois support, especially material, and there were implicit limits to egalitarianism. The irony is that the capitalist class is weak, lacking in entrepreneurial vigour and preferring trading to investment, except to Miami banks. It will be interesting to see what the reaction of that class will be to Manley's expected victory in the 1989 general election.

Compared to such rich fare, the volume edited by Jorge Heine and Leslic Manigat—by the latter before he became an ill-fated President of Haiti for a short while—is disappointing. The essays are uneven in quality, but the collection is saved by a few bright spots. Carl Stone's 'The Caribbean and the world economy' clearly demonstrates the critical importance of foreign exchange to Caribbean development, a not altogether surprising conclusion given that the region is (in Heine's words) 'the most externally dependent area in the world'. Paul Ashley's contrasting analysis of Jamaican foreign policy under Manley and Seaga respectively is masterly, and is quoted approvingly by Payne. Vaughan Lewis, no doubt with Manley's 'political symbolism' in mind, argues cogently for consistency between foreign policy goals and domestic economy objectives as well as the need to anticipate external responses to domestic initiatives. Robert Pastor's 'Caribbean emigration and US immigration policy' is also valuable.

By contrast, Mirlande Manigat's analysis of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) lacks a fundamental understanding of the organisation. Leslic Manigat's contribution is tortuous and in parts facile, such as his statement that Cuba is merely a tool of the Soviet Union, having only 'tactical freedom'. Edward Gonzalez' plea for a 'Finlandisation of Cuba' is fanciful, and his calculation of what the USA must commit militarily to contain the rebel island is simply depressing. Clearly, Cuba- and Jamaica—will continue to ensure the Caribbean's place on the international political agenda.

TONY THORNDIKE

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Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers

James Ferguson

Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1987. 171pp. £16.50hb

Grenada: the jewel despoiled

Gordon K Lewis

Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1987. 239pp. £17.75hb

The collapse of the Duvalier regime in Haiti in February 1986 and of the New Jewel revolution in Grenada in October 1983 were among the most dramatic events of a turbulent decade of Caribbean politics. Each case involved the overthrow of entrenched dictatorships (in the case of Grenada, that of Eric Gairy by a coup in March 1979); in each, the populace was mobilised in the expectation or furtherance of radical social, economic and political change; and in each, the process was frustrated, stifled or brought to a premature end by military force, locally executed as in Haiti in June 1988 (but probably enjoying covert US support), and locally executed as in Grenada, in turn itself subsequently terminated by US invasion one week later. The two books under review, in their distinctive ways, do much to make these events intelligible and to situate the particular experiences within the context of contemporary Caribbean politics.

James Ferguson approaches his study by way of narrative. *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers* opens with a general review of Haitian history to 1957. He then goes on to examine the pattern and form of dictatorship under the Duvalier dynasty, contrasting the political style of the father to that of the son, and identifying the shifting social basis of support for both. Finally, he sets out in detail the events surrounding the fall of 'Baby Doc' and the confusing eighteen months that followed. His account, unfortunately, does not follow this through to the end, that is to the election that temporarily brought a civilian government to power under President Manigat. He is, however, prescient enough to warn in the last few pages of the danger of military intervention and that the incipient 'revolution' was likely to be 'frustrated'.

Ferguson's account is lucidly written and clearly set out. His emphasis throughout on the continuities of the past in present day Haiti is an important theme which cannot be overestimated. It also serves as a warning on any 'instant' judgement, with its reliance on stereotypes to explain what is, in fact, a contradictory and complex reality. In short, Ferguson has authored an excellent introduction to Haiti's recent politics and one that can be confidently recommended to the reader approaching the subject for the first time.

By contrast, Gordon Lewis's remarkable account of the Grenadian revolution, *Grenada: the jewel despoiled*, is for the *aficianado* of Caribbean affairs. It seeks to sum up the revolutionary experience; to reflect upon it; and to draw out the various lessons it contains. Lewis is, by common consent, the most respected and authoritative political scientist working on and in the region today. He is therefore ideally placed to undertake such a task and has risen to the occasion. The book produces little new in the way of 'fact'. Rather, drawing on the work of others, Lewis qualitatively advances our understanding of the revolution and invites us to recognise it as 'a crucial turning point in the history and character of the Caribbean, and especially of the English-speaking Commonwealth Caribbean'.

Lewis's style is very much one of critical empathy. It assumes some familiarity with the chronology of the revolution and with politics in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Facts, sometimes shaky, are very much the servant of insight and generalisation. Of particular note is the way Lewis invokes revolutionary experience elsewhere—that of France in particular—to set the dynamics of the revolution in context. While he thus acknowledges that Grenada of 1979–83 did not achieve the stature of a great revolution (1848 rather than 1789 is a closer parallel in France) his work nevertheless raises issues germane to all revolutionary processes and those in the Caribbean in particular. In

respect of the latter, Grenada appears as a particular 'moment' (whose highest expression was the rescue of its captured leader, Maurice Bishop, by the Grenadian masses on 19 October 1983) illustrative of the general configuration of the Caribbean condition then obtaining and the inherent possibilities for transformation within it.

To summarise Lewis with any justice is impossible. Instead, one can only urge that he be read and that the book be discussed as widely as possible. Detractors of the Grenada revolution, as well as supporters, will find much food for thought. The later chapters—on the imperialist ideology and mentality; lessons for the Caribbean state system; and lessons for the Caribbean left—deserve particular attention in the region. The fact that they will arouse controversy is itself a measure of the penetrating insights they contain. His discussion elsewhere—of personality and ideology in the conflict between Coard and Bishop; of party control versus popular sovereignty in the revolutionary process; and of blame and guilt at the end of the day—are likely to be equally contentious. Everyone with the Caribbean at heart will want a say. Gordon Lewis is to be thanked, not for having the last say but for bringing the Grenada revolution once more before the people of the Caribbean, making it a live issue and forcing them, and the attentive Caribbeanist outside the region, to come to terms with its innermost meaning.

PAUL SUITON

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The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia

Jonathan Hartlyn

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 332pp. £27.50hb

As someone trained in political science, I must confess to some deep suspicions about the discipline. First amongst them is a dislike for the application of obscure terminology and inappropriate concepts for the sake of academic credibility, to problems that could be dealt with in a much more straightforward manner. So, when I opened Hartlyn's book and read the word 'consociational', I have to admit it prejudiced me against what is in fact a very interesting book.

Hartlyn has attempted to give his interpretation of recent Colombian history a theoretical framework, first advanced with respect to efforts to resolve ethnic, cultural and linguistic divisions in Western Europe through coalition governments. Colombia's deeply-held loyalties to its two traditional parties are, he argues, 'functional alternatives', if not exact equivalents, to those other divisions. However, I am not convinced that this framework illuminates the Colombian situation significantly, given the caveats the author himself makes about applying a concept developed in Western Europe to a Third World country and one of the uniqueness and complexity of character of Colombia.

Hartlyn is trying to make a case for a non-Marxist analysis of the country, focusing on the political regime rather than social classes and the economy, as a means of explaining Colombia's particularly stable economic development over the last decades compared with most other Latin American countries. The coalition pact of the two tra-

ditional parties in 1958, following a period of very bloody civil war between them, certainly contained the conflicts which might have held back economic growth and development. The quick suppression of populist projects, and the non-emergence of neo-liberal monetarist solutions under a military dictatorship, illustrate the success of the ruling elite and their political allies in overcoming their internal divisions, allowing them to pursue economic policies with considerably less political pressure than in other Latin American countries.

The less successful side of the picture, as Hartlyn points out, is that the pact created within it the seeds of its own potential downfall. Party loyalties that previously sustained the political system have slowly evaporated as party leaders sought to bury or control their differences, resulting in a serious crisis of legitimacy of the political system. Today, the political system rests more on clientelism and corruption than on real allegiances. The pact inhibited the economic and social reforms which could have restored some legitimacy. A weak state has served the interests of the ruling elites, but it has left vast numbers of people untouched by the process of growth. According to the latest figures of the government statistical office (DANE), almost a quarter of the population live in 'misery'. The poor have resorted to 'non-political' survival strategies or 'get-rich-quick' options such as petty-crime and, most recently and notoriously, cocaine production and traffic. Or they have taken a more political direction, from civic movements and rural and urban unions on one side, to guerrilla warfare on the extreme.

The failure of the system to cope with the pressure for change from below, the resort to political violence against those who seek participation in a political system, controlled almost without question by the two traditional parties till very recently, are not so easily explained by Hartlyn. Anxious (quite rightly) to avoid crude economic determinism, Hartlyn seems to fall into the trap of focusing so much on the political system that the responsibility of the country's ruling elites in today's crisis, the myopia of the majority in their fear of opening up the political system to broader participation, is left unexplained. The emergence of 120 officially acknowledged paramilitary groups, a growing wave of hideous political killings and massacres of political activists and union organisers (over 400 known, and 600 suspected, political killings in the first six months of 1988) in which Amnesty International claim the army is deeply involved, as are landowners, businessmen and drug barons, is not anarchic violence. An element of class analysis might have helped here.

While feeling unsatisfied with a number of aspects of this book, it is without doubt a major contribution to our understanding of contemporary Colombian politics. This book provides much useful information on and insight into an extremely complex, multifaceted and fundamentally difficult country to unravel.

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Managing World Debt

Edited by Stephany Griffith-Jones

Hemel Hempstead, England: Harvester Wheatsheaf/New York: St Martin's Press. 1988.
386pp. £35.00hb

Developing Country Debt: the role of the commercial banks

H A Holley

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1987. 85 pp. £5.95pb

Managing Third World Debt

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development

London: Overseas Development Institute. 1987. 76pp. £4.70pb

A Fate Worse Than Debt

Susan George

London: Penguin. 1988. 290pp. £4.50pb

There can be few global issues that are currently receiving as much attention as is the problem of developing country debt. It is therefore not surprising to see a continuing stream of books emerging on the subject. Moreover, debt is not a topic which is only of interest to economic theoreticians. Although economic theory does have a contribution to make, the debate on Third World debt also involves those who look at the problem from a political, international relations and developmental perspective. Not only academics but also policy-makers, politicians, bankers and financial commentators may be expected to have something to say on the subject.

The books under review here illustrate the degree of interest in the debt problem, providing a reasonably representative sample of the books that have been written on the subject in the last few years, as well as the diversity of approach. H A Holley is a banker. Stephany Griffith-Jones is an academic (though not a theoretician), Susan George is a journalist/commentator and the Parliamentary Group are politicians!

Of course, writing in an area which is topical and fast moving gives rise to problems. First, if the subject is topical, the chances are that there will be a large volume of material being produced and the problem is to differentiate one's own particular contribution. Second, if it is fast moving, the chances are that, with the publication lags involved, the material will be out of date by the time it is published. The books reviewed here deal quite well with the former problem, but, perhaps not surprisingly, less well with the second. Each of the books provides at least a slightly differentiated focus on the debt problem, but, in general, they fail to anticipate many of the developments that have dominated the last few months; debt sales and swaps, voluntary debt relief and so on.

This latter comment is least justified in the case of *Managing World Debt*, edited by Stephany Griffith-Jones. In a final chapter, written with typical clarity, Dr Griffith-Jones specifically examines future policy, but in the context of the lessons that may be drawn from the experiences of indebted countries in the fairly recent past, as reported in earlier chapters of the book. The analysis of why indebted countries adopted the negotiating posture that they did, and how this may change, is very important, but is also frequently neglected. Analyses of the political economy of debt almost certainly get us somewhat further in understanding the debt problem and ways of resolving it than do endless debt simulation models that may, in the extreme, be used almost to

assume the problem away, or discussions of policies which ignore the question of feasibility. This question is, of course, largely irrelevant if it is felt that the debt problem does not have to be 'managed' at all but can be left to the market mechanism. The title of Stephany Griffith-Jones' book clearly shows what conclusion she reaches. However, some writers on debt argue that management is not needed and that 'muddling through' is the most efficient way of dealing with the problem. They will therefore disagree with many of the conclusions reached by Dr Griffith-Jones. Yet, even though unlikely to achieve unanimous approval, Dr Griffith-Jones' book can fairly claim to be a major contribution to the literature.

H A Holley's book focuses, in the title at least, on *Developing Country Debt: the role of the commercial banks*. From a reviewer's angle, the book has the immense appeal of brevity; the author has wisely resisted the temptation to become bogged down in the mass of empirical evidence that is available. However, the danger with brevity is that it can result in superficiality and this is a danger Holley has not entirely avoided. Moreover, the book does tend to describe and report events rather than to analyse them. Most disappointing in many ways is the chapter dealing with prospects and policies. Given Holley's background in banking, a detailed analysis of the banks' changing attitudes to Third World debt, and of what their contribution to solving the problem might and should be, would have been more rewarding than the somewhat guarded remarks that are actually offered. Thus we find that 'how successfully the Baker formula is going to work in practice ... has yet to be seen', and 'the commercial banks' own likely contribution ... is difficult to assess'. Furthermore, greater differentiation between the attitudes of banks in different countries and between the US money centre banks and the regional banks would have been instructive. However, it is interesting that a former senior banker concedes that some form of relief provision by the banks, 'though unlikely to be undertaken in the immediate future, might eventually be seen as a mutually acceptable way to resolve a large part of the developing country debt problem'.

Another brief offering comes from a UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development in the form of *Managing Third World Debt*. For the uninitiated reader who wants a quick introduction to the subject this report admirably fills the bill, with chapters on the origins of the debt crisis; the size of developing country debt; the international institutional arrangements; what is being done; and alternative proposals. For the initiated reader most of this material will be common knowledge, and the interest of the book lies in who is saying what is said. If one accepts the view that the market left to itself will fail to solve the debt problem, then the alternative of some form of intervention will require political commitment. The concern of those who agree that a more activist strategy is required, will be that the parliamentarians associated with this report may have little or no impact on governmental decisions.

As all the books reviewed here demonstrate, there is no shortage of ideas as to how the debt problem could be alleviated. The lack has been in terms of the political will to implement some of these ideas. A key question is therefore how to influence the people who make the decisions.

The approach to this question adopted by Susan George in her book, *A Fate Worse Than Debt*, is to state the case for reform as colourfully as possible. She argues that 'the debt crisis is too serious to be left to financiers and economists' who have, 'for the most part, mystified the debt issue'. George has indeed produced a lively and readable

book, although it is probably rather over long for the purpose she has in mind. The problem with the use of colourful language is that it can become intemperate and then inaccurate and therefore easy to dismiss. Susan George believes that the moderation and 'muffled language' used by researchers does little good. She quotes (p 253) as an example, the Overseas Development Institute research on IMF conditionality (in which this reviewer should admit involvement), which she feels was not taken seriously. A reasonable counter-claim could be made concerning which approach illicit the greater response. There is some evidence that IMF policies have been modified as a result of the debate over conditionality to which the ODI project made a significant contribution. Moreover, while George maintains that the book is 'scientific', she severely weakens her claim by misrepresenting the arguments made by others. Again referring to the ODI study, she says that it showed 'as irrefutably as one could wish that present Fund conditionality doesn't work and should be scrapped'. The study in fact argued that Fund conditionality, as then operated, might not be appropriate in all cases and therefore could become more flexible--a very different, if less flamboyant, conclusion.

While all the books reviewed here were worthy of publication for one reason or another, and while some of them, notably *Managing World Debt*, will no doubt find their way on to many reading lists as at least a supplementary reference, there still remains a gap in the market for a comprehensive and measured analysis of Third World debt suitable for undergraduates. No doubt at this very moment authors are trying to provide just such a text, and it will be surprising if the next few years do not produce a number of contending volumes. Having had the era of the monograph and conference volume, the next era will be that of the student text book.

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'The Cambodian Agony

Edited by David A Ablin and Marlowe Hood

Armonk, New York/London: M E Sharpe, 1987. 418pp. n/p

For almost two decades since the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk by a right-wing coup in 1970, the people of Kampuchea, or Cambodia as it was formerly known, have suffered to a degree that few other nations have in modern history. War, revolution, famine and foreign intervention have followed each other in quick succession, perpetuating for its people an almost endless agony. The great powers--the USA, China and the Soviet Union--have cynically advanced their own interests at the expense of the Kampuchean people throughout the past twenty years. The massive US bombing of Kampuchea in the early 1970s is widely seen now as having been a contributory factor to the Khmer Rouge seizure of power in 1975 and to the ferocity they demonstrated while in control of Kampuchea. China has been the faithful ally and arms supplier of the Khmer Rouge throughout and even today refuses to distance itself from them. For its part the Soviet Union has bankrolled impoverished Vietnam, enabling it to continue to maintain its substantial military force in Kampuchea.

Now for the first time in decades there is the prospect, admittedly still fragile, that

the Kampuchean people will see peace restored to their country. In December 1987 Prince Sihanouk, leader of the anti-Vietnamese Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea met with the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, Hun Sen. In May 1988 Vietnam announced it was withdrawing 50,000 of its troops from Kampuchea before the end of the year. In July 1988 all the parties to the Kampuchean conflict met in the Indonesian town of Bogor, the first hopeful sign that the long agony of the Kampuchean people was coming to an end.

The Cambodian Agony, edited by David A Ablin and Marlowe Hood, is one of the most comprehensive surveys of that country's trauma to appear to date. The fourteen essays included in the volume, together with a valuable introduction, cover the political background, demography, anthropology and economy of Southeast Asia's most troubled country. One's greatest regret is that the essays, originally presented at a seminar at Princeton University, have taken some five years to appear in book form. Although the editors have taken the picture up to 1985 in their introduction, the essays have not undergone any radical updating. This leaves the chapters on international relations by Anthony Barnett and David W P Elliott particularly outdated.

But there is still much in the volume that merits reading for those interested in gaining a deeper insight into the Kampuchean tragedy. Timothy Carney, one of the best-known Cambodian scholars, presents an excellent survey of the military dispositions of the main parties to the conflict. May Ebiara, the only US anthropologist to have done fieldwork in Kampuchea, provides fascinating insights into village culture through the various political regimes the country has experienced. David Chandler, another well-known Cambodia scholar examines one of the few Khmer Rouge documents to have survived their period in power (1975-78), which gives a chilling insight into the mentality of the social revolution of those years. The French author, Serge Thion, reminds us of the roots in traditional Cambodian society that are relevant to the dramatic changes of the last twenty years. The book also contains a useful chronology of events up to April 1985 together with biographies of key political figures.

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Political Change in the Third World

Charles F Andrain

Boston/London: Unwin Hyman. 1988. 296pp. £28.00hb/£9.95pb

Political Parties in the Third World

Edited by Vicky Randall

London: Sage. 1988. 198pp. £25.00hb/£8.95pb

Third World Politics: a comparative introduction

Edited by Paul Cammack, David Pool and William Tordoff

London: Macmillan Education. 1988. 308 pp. £25.00hb/£7.97pb

In the last decade, the incidence of political upheaval and regime instability in the Third World has tended to increase rather than diminish. Academic interest in the issue has moved in parallel, producing a voluminous and growing literature on the subject.

Essentially, Charles Andrain returns to the 'political systems theory' of David Apter (see *Introduction to Political Analysis*, 1977) and others, and uses it to examine examples of contemporary political instability in the Third World. He classifies political systems into 'folk'; 'bureaucratic-authoritarian' (with agricultural and industrial variants); 'reconciliation'; and 'mobilisation' types (p 9). The author then identifies three types of causal variables: belief systems, socio-political and international structures and policy processes and performance (p 59). Chapters 4 to 8 are devoted to individual case studies of political change in Vietnam, Cuba, Chile, Nigeria and Iran.

The study is flawed by over reliance on a single model, and a rather simplistic empirical methodology (as in 'Models are pure, the empirical world is messier', p 2). As a result, the model itself becomes the dominant concern; the tendency is to test case studies against the model, rather than the other way round. Thus, when Andrain describes the Iranian revolution as 'retreating backward into traditionalism', he seems to give the requirements of his own (unilinear) model of political change priority over serious analysis of recent Iranian politics.

A minor irritant is the lack of a general bibliography. The footnotes, which consist of long lists of books and articles, with very little annotation, do not really compensate for this omission. Despite this, the book is well designed for teaching, and is accessible and coherent. To his credit, the author makes exhaustive use in chapters 4 to 8 of the model he elaborates in chapters 1 to 3. Unfortunately, this rigour has not produced many fresh insights into political change in these five states, or in the Third World in general.

The volume by Cammack et al is designed to introduce Third World politics to 'relative newcomers to non-Western politics'. The three authors adopt a comparative approach: Paul Cammack deals with Latin America, David Pool with the Middle East and William Tordoff with Africa. There are chapters on the state, political parties, the military, revolution, women and the international economic and political context. Each chapter includes a comparative introduction, regional syntheses or case studies and a comparative conclusion.

This book is a brave attempt to 'integrate a comparative approach with one that (is) thematic and historical' (p 1). In this it succeeds, but only partially. Given the structure of the book (with ten chapters, all of them comparative) the authors had to cover a great deal of material in very little space. At this they were remarkably good. But to be comprehensive, the study would have had to include a South or Southeast Asia expert. There are also too few francophone African examples, and any consideration of Israel and South Africa is lacking. Even so, as it stands, the book is not easy to read, given the constant chopping and changing of style and approach between the three authors.

The variable quality of contributions to collective works is always a problem. The sections on Latin America are well argued, and thought-provoking, and those on the Middle East clear and to the point. By contrast the sections on Africa are sometimes confusing and occasionally dull. Unfortunately, in this book, such unevenness limits the scope for comparative analysis.

It seems reasonable to argue that: 'What makes the politics of the Third World in some measure distinctive is not the nature of the peoples and politicians who take part

in it, but the nature of the circumstances in which they find themselves' (C Clapham, *Third World Politics: an introduction* 1985, p 1). A failure to appreciate this point sometimes leads William Tordoff into psychological and conjunctural explanations of African politics. In addition, vague statements such as 'the history of the emergence of the contemporary Third World is extremely varied and complex' (p 44) or 'the factors to be taken into account in explaining military intervention in Africa are frequently multiple and complex' (p 121) are better left out.

In some ways the most interesting chapters are those furthest removed from conventional comparative politics. In chapter 6 on women in Third World politics, the authors summarise anthropological, economic and Marxist approaches to the whole gender issue. The chapter is written with notable enthusiasm (see Tordoff's discussion of the 'Women's Wars' of 1929 in southern Nigeria, p 189). There are some inaccuracies but chapter 6 may well refresh parts of undergraduate comparative politics courses that other textbooks cannot reach. The fact that the chapter fits uncasily into the rest of the book, only indicates the lack of comparative studies on women in Third World politics. Chapter 5 on revolution also works well because the over-ambitious comparative-historical-thematic approach is replaced by one or two case studies from each region.

Three of the eight case studies presented in *Political Parties in the Third World* (G Philip on Mexico, R Pinkney on Ghana and V Randall on India) started life as conference papers. Vicky Randall has specially commissioned the others (M Farouk-Sluglett and P Sluglett on Iraq, P Cammack on Brazil, W Tordoff on Zambia, T Payne on Jamaica and J Griffiths on Cuba).

As Vicky Randall correctly notes in the introduction, more research is needed to 'correct for a current tendency to dismiss Third World political parties as of only marginal importance either as distinct institutions or in terms of their impact' (p 1). To this end, the editor has put a 'common set of questions' to the authors: first, how the party system originated; how it persisted, or why it did not persist; what role it fulfilled in the wider political system; and finally what the prospects of the party(ies) are.

Most of the authors have stuck quite closely to this recipe. Only George Philip's excellent chapter on the 'Dominant party system in Mexico' goes beyond the framework laid down by the editor. For once, economic, regional and international factors are all taken into consideration. He also sheds light on the complex relations between political parties and the central state machinery (as when he refers to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) as the 'Ministry of Elections'). Pinkney's study on Ghana suffers from theoretical overkill. There is no sense of the nitty gritty of Ghanaian party politics, leading him to conclude, absurdly, that 'most Ghanaians are floating voters' (p 51). Reality is once more being tested to see if it fits the model. Of the remaining chapters, those on Zambia and Cuba work less well than those on Iraq, India, Brazil and Jamaica.

It is a pity that Randall did not invite the contributors to tackle a more probing and adventurous 'common set of questions'. Why were they not asked to examine the relationship between political parties and the administration and the army, for example? It would have been fascinating to draw comparisons (even in passing) with political parties in the 'First' and 'Second' Worlds. One is left with unanswered questions, such as whether a vanguard party like the Cuban Communist Party, with restricted access, really has anything in common with a forced mobilisation party like the Iraqi Ba'ath.

The methodology adopted in these three books is 'social scientific' and empirical. The professionalisation of the social sciences has been a major impediment to the expansion of development studies over the past two decades. To anyone who has been convinced by neo-Marxist calls for interdisciplinary study of the Third World, these studies look like a throwback to the 'political development' research of the 1960s. The shortcomings of these three studies confirm the worst fears of the inappropriate nature of social science disciplinary boundaries for studying the Third World.

For anyone with an interest in the political affairs of the Third World, the volumes by Randall (ed) and Andrain will be essential reading. For teaching purposes, both Andrain and Cammack et al may prove useful introductory textbooks. However anyone with more than a passing knowledge of recent (and not so recent) debates on development and underdevelopment will probably find all three volumes disappointing.

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Women in Sub-Saharan Africa

Edda Ivan-Smith, Nidhi Tandon and Jane Connors

London: Minority Rights Group. 1988. 18pp. £1.80/\$3.95pb

Cold Hearths and Barren Slopes: the woodfuel crisis in the Third World

Bina Agarwal

London: Zed Press. 1986. 209pp. £18.95hb/£6.95pb

Women and Environment in the Third World: alliance for the future

Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson

London: Earthscan. 1988. 210pp. £5.95pb

Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World women's perspectives

Gita Sen and Caren Grown

London: Earthscan. 1988. 120pp. £3.95pb

Despite the decade of women and the long-standing knowledge that development does not 'trickle down', the world in general and economic planners in particular have yet to realise what has been obvious to most women working at grass roots for years: that it is time to seek a bottom-up approach before the majority of the world's people are irrevocably sucked into the vicious circle of drought, famine and destitution. The books reviewed here approach this problem in varying degrees of depth.

Though concerned with the plight of women, none of these books are mere catalogues of devastation and disaster. They do discuss the difficulties and the drudgery, but they also provide, in their different ways, solution and rays of optimism. *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa* is not so much an academic study but more of an information booklet

about 'the poorest people in the poorest continent'. It delineates the women's vital contribution to life and the food system in the region; it is they who carry out 70 per cent of the weeding, 90 per cent of the processing and carrying of water and food and 95 per cent of the cooking and family care. Yet in all but one of the forty-four nations in that continent, well over 50 per cent of the women are illiterate, most have no formal entitlement to land and few have the wherewithal to obtain a share in the meagre 5 per cent of total lending that is allocated to agriculture by the commercial banks. The booklet lists the well known problems faced by women who have no education, formal training or resources to enable them to improve the soil, prevent erosion and embark on long-term productive cultivation. What remains is a hopeless struggle with preventable results of environmental degradation, deforestation and encroaching desertification. Women, however, are all too aware of the dangers that their livelihood poses and have in many cases formed active groups, such as the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, to break out of this vicious circle. This movement, like its counterpart, the Chipko movement in India, seeks above all to restore the environmental balance through reforestation.

Both Bina Agarwal and the co-authors, Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson, refer to the following verse from a Garhwali song sung by Chipko activists:

come plant new trees, new forests
decorate the earth (Agarwal p 163; Dankelman and Davidson p 50)

Women and Environment in the Third World and *Cold Hearths and Barren Slopes* are both written by women using not only official statistics, documents and records, but also songs, folklores, life stories and photographs to illustrate the difficulties faced by women and the struggles they spiritedly embark on at the grass roots. The central issue is illustrated by Jeremy Hartley's striking photograph in *Women and Environment in the Third World*. It shows a woman walking to town across a desert dotted with dead bush. The caption reads '15 years ago this area of the Sahel was thick with trees'. Agarwal makes a similar point by quoting a Garhwali folk song:

Remember those forests of oak and rhododendron
fir and spruce
those tree of pine and deodar
that have vanished? (p 1)

These books maintain a rigorous analytical thread throughout, coherently unravelling the impending environmental disaster and offering practical solutions. Along with the poetry and songs, Bina Agarwal's *Cold Hearths and Barren Slopes* provides a detailed analysis of the woodfuel crisis, both in terms of the larger context of the political economy of the Third World and of the lives of the women involved. Her study offers a thoughtful analysis of the kinds of practical solutions that have evolved in discussion with the women. In particular the value of appropriate alternative solutions such as planting suitable trees and using fuel-efficient woodstoves is clearly demonstrated in terms of theory and empirical evidence.

Women and Environment in the Third World has a more general perspective. Written with contributions from women in five continents, it enumerates many pioneering initiatives embarked upon by women from all over the world, while emphasising the point that it is women themselves who should be empowered to deal with their own natural surroundings.

Development Crisis and Alternative Visions, written for Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), provides a practical framework of action for development policies evolved by and for Third World women. The book provides a specific historical and economic perspective on the impact of colonialism, debt, malnutrition and famine on women and critically analyses a range of methods formulated for reaching marginalised women. By understanding the conflicts and issues that challenge women's organisation, DAWN discovers new creative approaches to the problems. Gita Sen and Caren Grown reiterate the need for working out solutions at the local levels, by the people concerned and with an awareness of the cultural specificities of research methods and practical recommendations.

Obvious though such conclusions may seem, the necessity of involving the women on the land has for long been hidden from development planners. What these books do is to delineate clearly, both empirically and critically, that there is no need for yet another new slogan, or 'appropriate' technology designed in some Western capital and available at prices well above anything ever earned by peasant women. What is needed is a fundamental structural change in development approaches to women.

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Arms Transfers to the Third World 1971-85

Michael Brzoska and Thomas Ohlson

Oxford: Oxford University Press (for SIPRI). 1987. 383pp. £40.00hb

Arms Transfer Limitations and Third World Security

Edited by Thomas Ohlson

Oxford: Oxford University Press (for SIPRI). 1988. 260pp. £25.00hb

Arms Transfers to the Third World: probability models of superpower decision-making

Gregory S Sanjian

Boulder, Colorado/London: Lynne Rienner. 1988. 111pp. £13.95hb

Arms Transfers to the Third World 1971-85 is an account of the facts—the amounts and kinds of weapons imported by Third World states, from whom, and at what dollar cost—for the period covered by the book (which, in some of their tables and graphs, finishes short of the 1985 date advertised). The story they tell is one of growth until the early 1980s when slackening demand started to flatten out the curve. The producers' shares of the market altered over the period too, bringing a relative increase in the market share of West European and indigenous (intra-Third World) exporters. From 1971-75 the superpowers had 75 per cent of the market; from 1981-85 their share was down to 60 per cent.

But some things never change. After a slight dip at the end of the 1970s, the Middle East was again by 1983 taking up half of all Third World arms imports. To a critical

eye this fact alone rather reinforces any pre-existing doubts about blandly treating the Third World as a unit. With so many arms going to a region which can, by and large, afford them, perhaps it follows that arms imports statistics are often a red herring in debates about development.

The authors have been as careful as they know how, and facts are facts, but two things are missing from the Brzoska and Ohlson compendium. The first is a decent respect for the English language. What is one to make of the locution 'imports of arms to South Africa' (emphasis added) which recurs in various connections throughout the narrative (non-tabulation) parts of the book? The second and much more serious lack is of a decent respect for figures. Anyone who has wrestled with differential inflation rates, shifting international exchange rates, and secrecy and shiftiness on the part of governments concerning where arms exports are going to, and where arms imports have come from, will recognise that this reviewer's 75 per cent and 60 per cent market share figures quoted above are only 'ballpark' figures (in US parlance)—accurate perhaps to within plus or minus three percentage points. Yet Brzoska and Ohlson insist on quoting figures of this sort to one place of decimals. We should laugh out loud at weather forecasters who predicted a temperature for noon tomorrow of 22.2 degrees centigrade, for their presumption at appearing to know what is unknowable to the pretended degree of precision. Indeed we should doubt their competence for the job.

The other book by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Arms Transfer Limitations and Third World Security*, is not about the facts and figures of the arms trade, but is a well edited collection of articles addressed to the single question: what is to be done about the arms trade?

It can be argued that nothing needs to be done, and that any attempt to impose control would do harm. After all, it is the recipients who know where the shoe pinches, when they need more arms and when they can do with fewer. Moreover, with a complete embargo on arms sales to the Third World, the weaker states of the world would simply be at the mercy of the stronger who could presumably find a way of locally manufacturing enough armaments to terrorise their weaker neighbours into submission. The development of a progressively freer market amongst suppliers—a state of affairs which Brzoska and Ohlson suggest is already coming into being as the superpowers' duopoly position weakens—adds force to this argument. The more suppliers there are, the nearer will the cost to the recipient of the armaments approach their cost of production, which in turn is likely to be appreciably lower than the cost of domestic manufacture.

To say that nothing should be done is perhaps to go too far. The very weakest states will still find armaments expensive and it would accordingly be quite wrong for international aid to such states to be tied to 'peaceful' uses. It would also be a good thing if the trade in small or smallish arms, and second-hand arms, could be deprived of its 'back street' image. This only acts to the benefit of producers of the latest and most expensive equipment. We are a long way from a *perfectly* competitive market place, and the availability and very often suitability of small or second-hand armaments is not immediately going to be apparent amidst the din of expensive publicity for the latest item of sophisticated hardware.

Indeed, if the objective is to permit every sovereign state the opportunity to safeguard its defence at the lowest possible cost (absent any transformation of the global order from its present foundations of a series of rough equilibriums of power) everything

should be done to convert the governments of Third World states in particular into well informed and discriminating consumers, by giving the arms trade in all its aspects as much publicity as possible.

When wars do break out, and only then, should the chief suppliers depart from the market principle and see to it that both sides are supplied with as many arms as they want of a defensive kind where possible--so that the war will drag on to neither side's advantage and will ultimately end, like the Great War, or the Iran-Iraq war, by giving wars a bad reputation. Again this is only being realistic. As the edited collection shows, collective superpower cooperation--albeit in the form of restraint *tout court*--in the supply of arms has in the past tended to focus on war situations.

It might be suspected that the drift of the above *laissez faire* scheme would be anathema to the contributors to the SIPRI study. SIPRI studies, if not the Swedish government that subvents them, exist 'to facilitate arms control and disarmament efforts', and it is true that the editor and most contributors to the volume want to see the arms trade *limited*. But the sense of the volume is also very much in the direction of wishing to see a considerable freeing up of information about the arms trade. The reason *they* offer for this is the building of confidence, while a *laissez faire* theorist would argue that it won't make the market work better, but there is no argument. And whilst the edited volume is at root infected by the idea that the best way forward is a global system of collective security along the lines of what some of the founders of UNO thought they were setting up in 1945, nobody pretends that this is just around the corner.

The final book under review also has a SIPRI connection, in that its author relied on SIPRI data as the raw material upon which he tries to impress some sort of order and in which he tries to discern some sort of pattern.

Sanjian sets out to test the theory that states which export arms do so in pursuit of rational goals. Making the simplification that the only exporters worthy of note are the superpowers (not, as we have seen, an assumption we should as comfortably make today), he postulates that their regional arms export policies will be governed according to whether or not they are in competition for influence in that region, and according to whether the region itself is turbulent or quiescent. So, to give an example, in any given period of time, the USA would cut arms exports to a country in a turbulent region the Soviet Union was not interested in, if relations between the USA and other countries in the region were improving. And he can test the idea scientifically, in that trade trends, *inter alia*, can be used to indicate rises and falls in the temperature of relations between the interacting states.

He then tries out this 'rational actor' model, for each superpower, for the period 1951-76, and over four export regions--the Middle East, South Asia, the Arabian/Persian Gulf and Central America. And he finds that it works, except for Central America. The reason he only gets three out of four, it seems to me, is quite fundamental. The 'region' as an international unit does not have the self-defining qualities of the 'state'. Sanjian's definition of Central America does not contain Cuba (the line, of course, has to be drawn somewhere), but whenever, post-1960, US domino theorising arms trade decision-makers turned their gaze down Mexico way, surely Cuba must have been very much in their minds.

If even the easiest thing concerning the arms trade is very difficult--the accumulation of accurate facts and figures--the hard task, of arriving at a genuine understanding of what is going on, is almost impossible. The books reviewed, and the advance lists of

publishers, show that if the arms trade itself is slackening off, the business of seeking an understanding is thriving.

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Third World Film Making and the West

Roy Armes

Berkeley, California: University of California Press. 1987. 381pp. \$49.95hb/\$17.95pb

The Garden of Forking Paths: Argentine cinema

Edited by John King and Nissa Torrents

London: British Film Institute. 1988. 144pp. £3.95pb

It seems that Third World countries are responsible for approximately 60 per cent of the world's commercial film production, and indeed the industries of east Asia have given that continent a 50 per cent share for thirty years or more. Yet with only one or two exceptions, this enormous output earns hardly more than a paragraph or two in the surveys of world cinema history, which are invariably written by First World film critics. Roy Armes, a film historian who teaches at the Middlesex Polytechnic in London, sets out to make a dent in this insufferable arrogance with an ambitious book which reviews in outline the development of cinema in the Third World from its often very early beginnings to the 1980s.

The title of *Third World Film Making and the West* is perhaps misleading. Although the author claims at the outset that this is a study of Third World film making from a Western standpoint, it is not particularly concerned with the proclivities and susceptibilities of Western viewers confronted with alien cultural artifacts, and the misreadings which result. It is intended rather to register the forms of dependency to which Third World cinema is inevitably subject, both economically and aesthetically, which derive from the fact that cinema originates in the West, and its norms—both economic and aesthetic—are established by Western dominance, especially through control of distribution. A good part of the book is therefore taken up with analysing the context in which Third World cinema operates, including the manner in which the economic dominance of Western, especially Hollywood cinema, works, and the debates concerning culture and national identity into which progressive Third World film makers are inevitably drawn. This is followed by a survey of individual national film industries, which reports dispassionately on their main trends.

'One of the crucial elements,' says Armes, 'in an evaluation of Third World film making is the location of the film maker astride two cultures, on the one hand using a Western-originated technology and often employing formal structures of narrative derived from the West, and on the other drawing on—and relating the work produced to—his or her own native tradition.' The trouble is that most of the film makers concerned belong to privileged middle-class sectors, an origin which places them apart from native traditions to begin with. Those who become aware of the resulting tensions are the film

makers who matter most, historically and aesthetically, and the last part of the book provides a sympathetic account of a group of them, designed to indicate several different tendencies: Satyajit Ray, Youssef Chahine, Glauber Rocha, Yilmaz Güney, Ousmane Sembène and Jorge Sanjinés.

Not everyone will agree with Armes' conclusion that it is indeed possible to generalise about the disparate societies which the book discusses. Readers located within those societies or with specialist knowledge of any of them will doubtless be aware of shortcomings in the analyses, and occasional hasty formulations. For example, contrary to what Armes implies, the Argentinian, Fernando Birri, never thought that film produced a neutral rendering of reality, but on the contrary, its very transparency, when applied to subjects which had never previously been presented on the screen, gave them a critical edge. Film theorists may well criticise the book for a failure to engage more deeply in the critical issues of representation which have been developed over the last couple of decades. Nevertheless, this is a significant study simply for the wealth of information it assembles. The greatest frustration one feels upon reading it is that the vast majority of the films it discusses remain unknown and unseen in the world at large.

The opportunity to see these films generally occurs only in a *cinémathèque* or film festival retrospective, such as the recent season at London's National Film Theatre which occasioned the publication of *The Garden of Forking Paths*, a useful anthology on Argentine cinema edited by John King and Nissa Torrents. Here, as in the book by Armes, there is an emphasis on the political context within which the films are made; because of its character as an anthology, there is unfortunately a good deal of repetition to boot. There is also a poignant subtext: the irony that the resurgence of Argentine cinema in the last few years is one of the after effects of Argentina's defeat in the war of the South Atlantic and the demise of military rule. With censorship lifted and a new policy towards cinema, films have appeared which deal not only with the period of the military and the war itself, but also with a series of themes which it had been impossible to treat since 1976.

In the context of the issues raised by Roy Armes, perhaps the most important contribution in this volume is the essay by Nissa Torrents. Most English-language writings on Argentine cinema, she observes, have concentrated on a very small part of its output (the work of Birri, *The Hour of the Furnaces* by Solanas and Getino, and the Cinema of Liberation movement). It is not to belittle the importance of this work to point out that Western critics who have used the theoretical framework associated with these figures to explain Argentine cinema as a whole are in danger of bringing the wrong conceptual tools to bear. *The Hour of the Furnaces* itself, which gripped the rebellious European imagination at the end of the 1960s, is a fallacious, if extremely powerful, representation of Argentine reality, while Argentine cinema today 'is trying to break down these Manichean simplicities in search of a pluralist, heterodox language'. As the director, Bebe Kamin, puts it, 'This must be one of the few cases in which a dependent cinema . . . has made such an international impact.' All the more ironic that the cinema of the imperialist country which defeated the generals has lost its grip on its own reality and must now be considered, for the most part, as itself a dependent cinema, forever trying to make big on the US market.

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Third World Foundation News

1988 Third World Prize

On 18 November 1988 the Third World Prize Committee announced in London that the 1988 prize, worth \$100,000, was to be awarded to Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, for her work as leader of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

The Third World Prize is awarded annually to an individual or institution in recognition of an outstanding contribution to Third World development. In its citation, the Prize Committee noted that since her appointment as leader of the Commission in 1984, Gro Brundtland had fostered the connection between environment and development—originally regarded as being 'on the fringe of a fringe issue'—so that 'today environment is a priority agenda item for global action and the link between environment and development is firmly and authoritatively established'.

The Committee said that this change had been influenced in part by the mounting tempo of environmental disasters: the drought-triggered crisis in Africa; Bhopal; the Mexican gas explosion; Chernobyl; the Bangladesh floods; and that 'Gro Brundtland's achievement, through the Commission, is to have brought these events, and more, into the perspective of environment and development and to have provided a message of hope rather than fatalistic acceptance'.

The Committee acknowledged the special leadership role that Gro Brundtland has played in widening the outlook of the developed world. It noted the tendency for industrialised countries to regard industrial waste as unacceptable within their own boundaries, but tolerable if it could be passed on to poorer developing countries, and said that 'by bringing her country's internationalist and humanitarian traditions to bear, Gro Brundtland has lifted the horizons of environmentalism to new levels of universality . . . Gro Brundtland and the Commission have made the international community realise that poverty is the ultimate polluter. Poor people are driven by the necessity of survival to destroy their own environment. Tropical forests, water-sheds, semi-arid land are, in many parts of the Third World, being severely damaged as a result'.

The Committee's citation emphasised that the poor are the principal victims of environmental damage, since it is they who are forced to live on the poorest lands most prone to disasters such as landslides, flood damage, drought and climatic extremes: global warming resulting from the energy use of the developed world will thus most affect those with least capacity to adapt. The environmental problems of the poor will in turn affect the rich through political instability and turmoil.

The Committee praised Gro Brundtland for her resolution in facing the controversial implications of her Commission's analysis. The expanding and generous aid programme of Brundtland's government supported the Commission's conclusion that strong economic growth is essential for economic development. She was also praised, however, for her work in the fields of multilateralism and women's rights: under her leadership the Commission emphasised the massive contribution women make to development, which often remains unrecognised in conventional economic accounting, and she kept to the fore of the Commission's work a clear sense of internationalist values and the need for multilateral cooperation.

The Third World Prize Committee recognised the significance of the Brundtland Report, 'a document of seminal importance for the future of human progress . . . The Brundtland Report has already influenced the policies of many individual governments towards environment and development. Further, as agreed at the July 1988 Oslo Conference, all the agencies of the UN system, including the international financing institutions, have made a common commitment to sustainable development'. It concluded by stating that 'Gro Harlem Brundtland deserves particular recognition for having so constructively and clearly described the challenges before us and the means by which we can overcome what represents, ultimately, a threat to life on earth'.

'Global Economic Security' international conference Moscow, 22-26 August 1988

An international meeting on Global Economic Security was held in Moscow on 22-26 August 1988, under the auspices of South Magazine, the Third World Foundation and the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. The meeting discussed the linkage between international tensions and economic insecurity, and was attended by representatives from international organisations together with scholars and public figures from Africa, Asia, America and Europe. A message from the United Nations Secretary General underlined the importance of the meeting in delineating and defining concrete themes relating to Global Economic Security.

The common conviction was expressed that global economic security is a critical element of a comprehensive system of international security. The challenge for all countries is to grasp the opportunity offered by the present spirit of constructive cooperation in international relations to bring about a corresponding improvement in global economic relations.

Underlying the discussion held by the participants was a recognition of the growing interdependence of national economies and the collective responsibility of nations for sustaining economic growth and ensuring that the benefits of that growth are shared in an equitable fashion. Unsustainable structural imbalances in the North, insufficient investment in the South, use of

external economic pressures for political ends, and serious difficulties with the current monetary and financial order and the system of world trade were already frustrating the desired goals of growth.

In a wide-ranging discussion the participants identified a number of areas in which they agreed constructive action could be taken:

- Immediate resolution of the developing nation debt crisis in a manner which ensures that new productive and social investment will take place in the developing countries.
- The provision of sufficient liquidity to promote growth and avoid exchange rate instability.
- Elimination of discriminatory practices from international economic relations.
- The stabilisation of commodity prices at fair and adequate levels.
- Solutions to the problems of food and energy production in a manner consistent with the goals of eradicating poverty and hunger and protecting the environment.
- New measures to ensure increased investment in, exports from, and technology transfer to the developing countries.

The participants agreed that an increasingly interdependent world has created new political, economic and social imperatives which require radically different responses at all levels. A thorough examination of these imperatives and the necessary responses must be undertaken, to focus attention on the need to develop institutions capable of sustaining equitable economic growth, redirecting world resources from armaments to productive areas of human progress, preserving the cultural heritage of different nations, promoting all-round development in the developing countries in accordance with the wishes and priorities of their people, resolving regional conflicts, preserving the environment, and maintaining world peace and harmony.

There was general recognition that the problems of global economic security are complex, and require continuing analysis and innovative thinking in order to specify further its objectives, parameters, constituent elements and the measures necessary for its implementation; taking into account the legitimate interests of all countries regardless of their socio-economic system or level of development.

There was unanimous support for the proposal that the subject of global economic security and the issues raised by it merit further consultations and that the sponsors of this meeting should undertake thorough preparations to convene an international congress on Global Economic Security. The theme for the congress is the recognition that new political, social and economic realities demand new thinking in order to formulate appropriate responses to those realities and to take advantage of the current constructive climate of international cooperation.

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The last phase of the Iran–Iraq war: from stalemate to ceasefire

The Iran–Iraq war is unusual among conflicts in the Third World in several respects. Most commonly cited are the costs in human life and economic resources, and its inordinate length. Less often remarked is the genre of conflict that it has represented, being untypical of the prevailing pattern in non-industrial areas, where the tendency has been for internal or civil wars. In contrast this was a relatively rare case of interstate conflict. It was a war in the classic mould in that it represented not simply a dispute about territory but also about power and ideas.

The war, which ended one month short of its eighth anniversary, had throughout the 1980s become part of the political and strategic landscape of the Middle East, establishing or accelerating new alignments and forcing new priorities. Because of its durability, its bouts of intense clashes alternating with seasonal lulls, and the impenetrability of the Iranian Islamic revolution, it had by the middle of the decade given rise to a host of assumptions, *bons mots* and clichés among observers that substituted for informed analysis. No part of the war, I believe, came as a greater surprise to such spectators (as well as to others) than the way the war ended, and it is on this phase in particular that this article is concentrated.

The onset of the war at least should not have come as a surprise. The relationship between revolution and war is a close one, as history has often shown. In this case, as in others, the advent of a cataclysmic change in a major state and its replacement by a revolutionary ‘order’ that made claims on its neighbours was bound to cause instability. The revolution in Iran upset the balance in two ways: first militarily, by replacing the Shah’s army with what seemed to be a revolutionary rabble; and second, politically, by making a conservative and satisfied Iran into a revolutionary power intent on the quasi-universal mission of spreading its version of true Islam and hence destabilising its neighbours. What made war likely—even inevitable—was not simply Iran’s provocation but also its neglect of, and disdain for, the traditional military balance between the two countries. (It had been this balance—in Iran’s favour—that had secured the 1975 Algiers Agreement and sustained the new relationship of respect and reciprocity that had followed

it.) Iran's rhetorical excesses and claims and inattention to the military balance were matched on the Iraqi side by a compound of fear and ambition: fear about Iran's goals if the revolution were to become entrenched, and ambition to achieve a position of regional supremacy while Iran was preoccupied and Iraq was in a relative position of unmatched military and economic strength. From Iraq's perspective the time to strike (preventively perhaps) was unlikely to be better than in 1980, before the revolution put down its roots, while its forces were in disarray, and while its relationship with both superpowers and most regional states was at best strained.¹

Iraq's miscalculation was severe in that it overestimated its own capabilities while misconstruing the nature of its adversary and the sources of power at Iran's disposal. For while revolutionary Iran was deficient in the traditional or quantitative indices of military power, it made up for this, to a certain extent, by reliance on the superior commitment of its populace to the regime and hence the war. Indeed so eagerly did the revolutionary regime embrace the war as a 'blessing', label it as a struggle between 'Islam and blasphemy', define its war aims as the overthrow of the Baathist regime in Baghdad, and use the war to suppress its enemies at home, that Iraq's leaders might well have wondered what Iran would have done in the absence of such an external diversion.

Iraq's inability to use surprise to military effect in the early weeks of the war was not as serious as its failure to fashion a clear political objective. It seems to have expected either a quick collapse of Iran's regime, or a willingness to sue for peace, based on limited losses. However, Iraq completely misjudged the nature of revolutionary systems which traditionally neither understand nor wage limited wars (let alone a revolution based on the Shii emphasis on the positive value of martyrdom and sacrifice). Martin Wight commented on this general phenomenon:

International revolution . . . transforms the character of war. It blurs the distinction between war and peace, international war and civil war, war and revolution . . . International revolutions generate revolutionary wars, in the sense that their wars are tinged with a doctrinal ferocity, and have unlimited aims. They tend to be not wars for defined objectives but crusades or wars for righteousness. They aim not at a negotiated peace but at a 'Carthaginian peace' or unconditional surrender.²

¹ For a more detailed discussion see Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, London: I B Tauris, 1988.

² M Wight, *Power Politics* (edited by H Bull and C Holbraad), London: Penguin/RNA, 1979, pp 89-90, 91-2.

Iran stumbled into a war which it did much to provoke but was ill prepared for. Once embarked upon the 'imposed war', which it embraced with characteristic ardour and militancy, Iran used it to harness the energies of the mobilised revolutionary rank and file, settle domestic scores, consolidate power and focus on the mission of the revolution abroad. The latter was less controversial than the events of the revolution at home, which remained contentious. The war thus came to represent a test for the revolution—its capacity for commitment and sacrifice, as well as its ingenuity and self-reliance. It came gradually to epitomise all the themes of suffering and martyrdom that the leadership seemed determined to cultivate. In time it simply displaced any other item on the agenda of the revolution. The war and the revolution had merged; support for the two had become so intertwined as to make them virtually indistinguishable.

If Iran's revolution and its claims helped to precipitate the conflict, its definition of the absolute stakes that the war represented helped fuel it long after it had stopped making any sense. Iran's expulsion of Iraqi forces from its territory had been effected by mid-1982, yet the momentum of war and the drive to extend the sway of the Islamic revolution throughout the region prevailed over a more sober assessment of Iran's military capabilities. A series of costly offensives led by revolutionary guards and volunteers (*Basijis*) failed. In the next two years the war settled down into a pattern of reckless Iranian attacks on Iraqi forces dug in behind water and earth obstacles, and defended by a network of mines, artillery and automatic weapons. Iran's attacks at Majnoon and Howeizah in the spring of 1984 and 1985 respectively, demonstrated Iran's ingenuity and tolerance for punishment but also an inability to hold the territory it had captured.

Iraq seemed unwilling to resort to counter-offensives or to take casualties; consequently it let Iran dictate the tempo of the war. Iraq also relied on superior weapon-systems because of its continued access to friendly governments (especially the USSR and France after 1982), but otherwise resorted to universal conscription. The morale of its forces appeared suspect if only because it had lost three times as many prisoners of war to Iran as its adversary had lost.

Iran by contrast relied heavily on the superior commitment of its forces. It constantly affirmed, and came to believe, the slogan articulated by Rafsanjani in 1984 that 'The faith of the Islamic troops is stronger than Iraq's superior firepower.' As a consequence Iran's leaders really believed that they could demonstrate the vitality of the revolution

and affirm its message and validity by confronting and overcoming adversity through self-reliance. They were in no mood for lessons from the West or the professional military; their war, like their revolution, was to be an experience unique in the annals of war, unsullied by practical considerations or constraints.

If Iran's military successes between 1982 and 1986 were ephemeral and costly, with long gaps between major offensives from 1984–86, the problem stemmed as much from deficiencies in strategy as from logistics. Alternating between frontal offensives and attrition along the length of the frontier ('defensive *jihad*'), between enthusiasm for the daring of the revolutionary guard and the more sober appraisals of the professional military, Iran's leaders were unable to frame a strategy that tied their war aims—the overthrow of the enemy—to their military capabilities, which in terms of equipment dwindled with each offensive. To achieve their war aims (which were 'total' in Clausewitzian terms), Iran needed either to defeat the enemy's forces decisively, or to capture a major strategic asset, thus precipitating their surrender (for example, the southern port city of Basra, which was predominantly Shii). The problem was that Iraq's forces would not venture out into the field to fight and risk defeat while the capture of Basra or Baghdad remained increasingly difficult because of their redundant defence lines.³ This gap between aims and capabilities was to widen and precipitate the process that led to the end of the war.

Iran fought the war with both hands tied; without dependable or rich allies, without access to weapons systems compatible with those in its inventory, and without the benefit of its own best-trained minds. Iran's leadership revelled in this, insisting, as Khomeini said in 1984, that 'Those who think that the Koran does not say "war until victory" are mistaken.' If self-sufficiency was the goal, then improvisation, self-reliance and a refusal to be bound by conventional approaches had to be the means. At times the war appeared to be merely a vehicle for consciousness-raising, rather than a deadly serious business. It was 'a continuation of politics with the admixture of other means' in a sense that Clausewitz had surely not meant or intended.

Even so, Iran seemed to be winning the war. The breakthrough at Fao in February 1986 seemed to confirm that an Iranian victory was only a matter of time. Jeffrey Record's analysis was typical of this conventional wisdom:

³ See my longer discussion of this problem in 'Les conduites de opérations militaires', *Politique Etrangère*, 2, 1987 (special issue on Iran-Irak. *La diplomatie du conflit*), pp 303–17.

The longer the war lasts, the greater the prospects for a decisive Iranian victory. Iran has three times the population of Iraq, and Iranian forces, though less well-equipped, appear to be much more highly motivated than those of Iraq. In February 1986 Iran launched a series of offensives that succeeded in gaining firm control of the Shatt-al Arab waterway. Iraqi counterattacks, which deliberately sought to avoid high casualty rates for fear of undermining already tepid popular support for the war, relied primarily upon artillery fire and failed to dislodge Iranian forces. According to some Western observers of the conflict, Iraqi military leadership borders on the incompetent, and Iraqi troops, especially infantry, have little motivation.⁴

By February 1986 a number of clichés had achieved widespread currency. One was that 'peace was only possible with the removal or disappearance of one or both of the two leaders, Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini', implying that compromise short of victory (for Iran) would be unimaginable and tantamount to political suicide. Another was that 'Iran could not lose the war nor Iraq win it', implying that time was on Iran's side. For the Iranian leadership the lesson drawn from Fao had been that a military solution to the war was now indeed possible, contrary to the cautious (and possibly faint-hearted) advice of the professional military. One Fao followed by several other similar incidents could wrap up the war quickly. What was lacking was not material for the war effort but commitment and faith. Iran's political leaders began to unlearn what had been learned painfully on the battlefield, namely that incremental success was an inadequate basis for achieving the total victory required to attain Iran's ambitious war aims; and that only a smashing, devastating defeat of the enemy could possibly achieve this, and such a defeat was still unattainable. Now, after Fao, it seemed more attainable, and the Iranian leadership sought to capitalise on its success by proclaiming 'a year of decision'. Naturally, it again reverted to the style of war most suited to its forces, the frontal offensive.

In fact, paradoxically, Fao was to be the culminating point of Iran's success, the point at which it both over-reached itself and misled itself as to the implications.⁵ Why was the prevailing wisdom regarding the likely outcome of the war, if it were to continue, so wrong? In war the relative positions of the two sides is in constant flux, and the longer the war the more fluid the picture and the more delicate the assessment of the relative balances on various levels between the two adversaries. To take but one element in relative strengths: Iran's superior commitment,

⁴ J Record, 'The US central command: toward what purpose?', *Strategic Review*, spring 1986, p 44, fn 4.

⁵ See E Luttwak, *Strategy: the logic of war and peace*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, Harvard University, 1987.

its principal asset, was neither indefinitely sustainable nor by itself an adequate substitute for access to weapons systems, spares and training. While 'final offensives' gave at least a semblance of momentum to Iran's war effort, so necessary to stimulate the 'bandwagon effect' on the popular forces of the revolution, they also ate up trained manpower and hard-to-replace equipment. And the prospect of breakthrough seemed to recede with each effort. Yet at the same time, recourse to a strategy of attrition held obvious drawbacks: it could not deliver the decisive victory essential for the achievement of Iran's war aims; it was uncongenial to the revolutionary spirit nurtured on *élan*, and it was a two-edged sword in that it could wear down Iran's will to fight as much as Iraq's, with quite devastating consequences because of the importance of commitment in Iran's limited inventory of assets. The superior commitment of Iran's troops, and Iran's will to continue the war could suffer from a strategy of attrition that relied on incremental progress without the dynamic momentum of battlefield success.

On the other hand, the instruments of war were dwindling; Iraqi air attacks and the sharp drop in the price of oil in 1986 made the replacement of weapons more economically onerous. At the same time the inventory of arms inherited from the Shah's day was a finite resource; at some point it could no longer be cannibalised and would need to be replaced. Furthermore Operation Staunch, in existence since 1984, was being taken more seriously by the US which appeared to be in a vengeful mood after the Irangate revelations. European governments also began to take the issue more seriously. Thus Iran's access to arms was being curtailed at precisely the time when its strategy called for more resources and when existing stocks could no longer be raided to serve as improvised replacements.

The gap between Iran's military capabilities and its political aims widened as the war went on. On every quantitative indicator of power, Iraq's position improved year by year, compared with that of Iran. To take a few illustrative examples: in terms of arms purchases (from all sources expressed in dollar terms), Iraq spent more than Iran every year between 1981 and 1985, in ratios varying between 6:1 and 3:1.⁶ Iraq consistently exceeded Iran in military expenditure, maintaining a constant annual rate of \$12-14 billion in 1984-87, while Iran's expenditure plunged and dipped from \$14 billion in 1985-86 to \$5.89 billion

⁶ Figures can be consulted in: *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1986*, quoted in 'Overview of the situation in the Persian Gulf', Hearings and Markup before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, May/June 1987, pp 230-1.

the next year to between \$6–8 billion in the succeeding years. As the war dragged on, Iraq's access to superior sources of arms became increasingly pronounced. In 1984 Iraq could 'only' manage a 2.5:1 superiority in tanks, 4:1 in aircraft and APC and had a 3:4 inferiority in artillery.⁷ This had widened by 1988 to 4:1 superiority in tanks, 10:1 in aircraft and 3:1 in artillery. The commander of the Revolutionary Guard, Mohsen Reza'i, was to say after the war: 'They had armour and we did not. If our circumstances in the war are not taken into account when comparisons are made with classical warfare, it will be a major error on the part of the analysts. We were unarmed infantrymen against the enemy's cavalry. There are few instances in the history of Islam of such a war.'⁸

Even Iran's much vaunted numerical advantage of 3:1 in terms of population was not much in evidence on the battlefield towards the end of the war. Whereas between 1986 and 1988 Iraq was able to increase its manpower by some 150,000 men, and reorganise and expand its forces from thirty to thirty-nine infantry divisions, Iran's manpower fell in the same period by 100,000 men.⁹

Not only did the declining pool of volunteers necessitate greater reliance on conscripts who could not match the former in zeal, but Iran's war effort was also clearly hampered by logistical difficulties. These stemmed partly from political decisions such as the fielding of two sets of armed forces, the regular military and Revolutionary Guard, who duplicated each other and did not always work harmoniously. The problems were no doubt compounded by the difficulties of supplying troops with an astonishing variety of ammunition and spare parts, some of Western origin, some bought and captured in the Soviet bloc, some from Third World sources and some of indigenous manufacture. It would have been surprising if under these conditions Iran could have obtained a 'teeth to tail' ratio anywhere near that of Iraq.

As Iran launched what were to be the last major offensives of the war at Basra and in the central sector between 24 December 1986 and mid-March 1987, the attacks took on the semblance of a last gasp—a

⁷ See 'War in the Gulf', a staff report prepared for the US Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate (Committee Print), Washington DC: USGPO, August 1984.

⁸ Tehran television, 22 September 1988, in BBC summary of world broadcasts ME/0267/A/3, 27 September 1988.

⁹ Unless otherwise stated these figures are all derived from the annual *USS Military Balance*, 1984–1988. Saddam Hussein recently boasted about this: 'Our people who began with 12 divisions at the beginning of the war, now have about 70 divisions at the end of the war. The entire world has never seen such a development.' Baghdad Home Service, 14 November 1988, in BBC summary of world broadcasts ME/0311/A/9, 17 November 1988.

make or break attempt to force a military decision. Even the limited advance toward Basra was revealing, for it demonstrated not the workings of an unstoppable, dynamic force, but proved to be a strenuous and costly effort barely adequate to sustain itself. As such, Iran could scarcely count on Iraq's collapse even in the unlikely event of the capture of Basra.

If the war was becoming harder for Iran to conduct militarily due to the demand for greater resources, it was also becoming more politically onerous in two ways. The strategy begun by Iraq in 1984 of internationalising the conflict was beginning to bear fruit. In 1986 the 'tanker war' had expanded, with more shipping hit and more casualties than the cumulative total of the preceding years. Iraq's aircraft with new missiles and air-refuelling capabilities were now ranging as far south as the Larak and Lavan terminals, putting at risk all Iran's oil terminals in the Persian Gulf.

In response Iran had threatened *in extremis* to close the straits of Hormuz, and in the meantime had targeted those Gulf states known to be actively supporting Iraq's war effort, particularly Kuwait. Iran's accusation that Kuwait served as a trans-shipment point for arms destined for Iraq and that the sheikhdom with its financial subsidies and anti-Iranian policies was in effect an undeclared belligerent, was not seriously contested. But neither the superpowers nor the Gulf Corporation Council states were prepared to condone Iran's targeting shipping destined for the Gulf sheikhdoms as a legitimate response to Iraq's attacks on Iran's shipping. This ran counter to the outside powers' policy of containing the Gulf war (as it had by now become) and defending the other Gulf states.

The more sustained Iraq's attacks on shipping serving Iran became, the more acute was the pressure on Iran to submit passively or to exert military pressure on the Gulf states. The dilemma posed did not admit of a solution; unable to find Iraqi targets in the waterway, Iran attacked the next best thing and found itself playing into Iraq's hands by antagonising both its immediate neighbours and the superpowers. (Iran's retaliation against third party shipping as a result of attacks sustained from Iraq thus played into Iraqi hands by bringing in outside powers against Iran.)

By mid-1987 the result of this was seen on two levels: a virtual schism between Persian and Arab states in the Gulf after the Mecca incident in July 1987, which was symbolised by the Arab summit conference in Amman in November 1987. At the insistence of Saudi Arabia, priority

was given at the conference for the first time to the Gulf war in Arab councils. The formation of Security Council resolution 598 by the United Nations was another indicator of the degree to which Iran's conduct in the war had aroused international concern and even stimulated a parallel response. The resolution, for all its apparently neutral terminology, was manifestly aimed at arresting Iran's continuation of the war, threatening mandatory sanctions (in the form of an arms embargo) if a ceasefire was not accepted.

This is not the place to discuss Iran's relations with the superpowers except to note that by mid-1987 it had done little to cultivate the friendship of either, and much to push the two together in order to contain and end the war. Soviet leaders, particularly Andrei Gromyko, repeatedly counselled Iranian officials that 'three years of negotiation are better than one day of war'. In December 1987 Gromyko told the Iranian ambassador prophetically that 'the later Iran's leaders reach the conclusion that it needs to end the war, the less favourable it will be for Iran'.¹⁰ Iranian leaders consistently overestimated their own centrality in international affairs and the importance of oil, while being insensitive to the changing nature of relations between the superpowers. At the same time they were unable to improve their margin for manoeuvre between the superpowers simply because Iran's ideological inflexibility shackled its diplomacy and prevented credible threats to ally with either the East or the West.

If the internationalisation of the war, regional isolation and the threat of a future comprehensive arms embargo increased the psychological pressure on Iran, the lack of success since the breakthrough at Fao had also begun to diminish the domestic enthusiasm for the war, even among the die-hard *hezbollah* (party of God) and the *mustazefin* (oppressed) class. Thus in the second arena, domestic politics, the cost of continuing the war without any decisive result was beginning to be felt.

There were several indications that Iranian leaders were at least reassessing their approach to the war as of mid-1987.

Iran's willingness to take up the gauntlet of the superpowers' decision to escort Kuwaiti shipping suggested that Iran somehow welcomed the diversion of a sideshow in the war.

Iran's unwillingness to reject the Security Council resolution outright but to seek modifications was also indicative of a change in attitude.

Iran's war aims, although still ambiguous, had nonetheless been

Pravda, 5 December 1987; *Izvestiya*, 8 December 1987.

modified over previous months; the demand for the removal of Saddam Hussein still stood, but the insistence on the removal of the Baath party, reparations, and the installation of an Islamic republic had disappeared.

4. The stream of volunteers for the front had dwindled and Iran's leaders, notably Rafsanjani, had begun to talk publicly in mid-1987 of continuing the war *unless* (or until) it began to interfere with the political administration of society.¹¹

By the autumn of 1987 Iran's leadership had begun to despair of a military solution to the conflict, but was still far from devising a diplomatic strategy for Iran's extrication from the war. For one thing, the war, whose importance had been repeatedly and irresponsibly inflated, and equated with 'Islam' and 'our life', was clearly becoming costly to continue, but who could guess what the political costs of ending it ignominiously—in failure—would be? And who would be the courageous soul willing to convince Khomeini of the need for an end to the war, and of the change in the cost-calculus of protracted war versus negotiations? This was not made any easier by the fact that Iran's sense of aggrievement about the origins of (and hence blame for) the start of the war was not shared by many permanent members of the Security Council, in part because of Iran's prolongation of the conflict since mid-1982. And the political collapse of Iraq now seemed more remote and a less likely source of salvation. Furthermore, the US fleet (aided by five European allies) had taken on the appearance of a permanent fixture, less vulnerable and therefore less susceptible to political intimidation than the land presence in Lebanon in 1982–83, to which Iranian leaders erroneously compared it.

However, it was one thing for Iran's war effort to be running out of steam and quite another for it to collapse outright, precipitating the difficult if unavoidable decision to sue for peace. The elements squeezing Iran's war effort were not on their own enough to galvanise its leaders into making such a momentous decision in favour of peace. Only a perception that the continuation of the war would threaten the very existence of the Islamic republic, Khomeini's legacy, could have done so. Simply stated, two sets of events catalysed Iran into the decision to seek a quick ceasefire in mid-1988: the intensive use by Iraq of long-range missiles on cities and chemical weapons on the front; and a consequent change in the balance of power on the ground, particularly the shattering of the morale of Iranian forces.

¹¹ Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, pp 73–4 and citations therein.

Although Iran and Iraq had been trading attacks on each other's city centres since 1984, they had not reached the intensity of the exchanges witnessed in the revived 'war of the cities' in early 1988. In earlier years Iraq had used its air superiority to take the war home to Iran by bombing Tehran (for example, in the spring of 1985), in order to raise the political and economic costs of continuing the war. This had had some political effect, but not enough to produce more than occasional panic and resentment. Iran had responded by proclaiming a programme for building air-shelters and by acquiring Soviet bloc ssms from Syria, Libya and possibly China. These missiles, together with artillery, were to counter Iraq's air threat to Iran's inland cities, for Iran had the advantage of being within shelling range of Iraq's principal cities. The situation of mutual vulnerability might have been expected to produce an end to these exchanges, were it not for Iraq's perception in late 1987 of the need to intensify the war against Iran at the period of its maximum vulnerability.

Reference has already been made to the widening gap between the two adversaries' military equipment. Nowhere was this more evident than in the next phase of the war, when Iraq launched 150 SCUD-B missiles (allegedly modified by East German technicians for extended range at the cost of reduced payload)¹² in a period of five weeks starting from the end of February 1988. In the same period Iran fired one-third the number. Less significant than the ratio was the fact that Iraq felt confident enough of the numbers at its disposal to loose off such barages, and it was indicative also that Iraq, with uncontested advantage in fixed-wing aircraft, was now being supplied with apparently unlimited numbers of ssms as well. The effect of these indiscriminate terror attacks was to instil panic in the urban populations. (It may be that the attempts of Iranian leaders to publicise these attacks for propaganda advantage inadvertently led to the amplification of their terror effect.) After the war, Rafsanjani was to claim that of a total of 133,000 Iranians killed, 10-11,000 deaths were attributable to air and missile attacks on cities.¹³

The effect of this was doubled by Iraq's resumed use of chemical weapons at the front, notably in the attack on the town of Halabja in the north. Again, the effects may have been greater psychologically than they were militarily. But it did not escape notice in Iran that the

¹² See *The Independent* 22 March 1988 and *Washington Post* 10 March 1988.

¹³ See Rafsanjani's speech in *Qom*, 24 September 1988, broadcast by Tehran radio on 25 September and excerpted in BBC/ME/0267/A/4, 27 September 1988.

international outcry at documented uses of these banned substances was relatively restrained when they fell on Iranian soldiers or villages. Rafsanjani was later to tell the Revolutionary Guards that the war had shown chemical and biological weapons to be 'very decisive', and that 'all the moral teachings of the world are not very effective when war reaches a serious position'.¹⁴

The turning point in the war came, I believe, shortly after this with the double blow sustained by Iran on 17–18 April 1988, when Fao was lost to Iraq and several boats to the US navy. Fao, of course, was politically and psychologically significant, being the major tangible symbol of Iranian success in the war, whose loss would leave Iran virtually empty-handed after six years of prolonging the war. But more important still was what Iraq's recapture of Fao signalled in terms of the shift that had taken place in the psychological balance; Iraq had dumped its 'defence only' policy of leaving the initiative to Iran, hiding behind static defences and seeking to limit casualties in engagements. By seizing the initiative and striking out with counter-offensives, Iraq not only complicated Iran's defence planning but showed evidence of a new and unsuspected confidence.

Certainly Iraq's new-found confidence and belligerence on the battlefield came as a surprise to the Iranians, who were used to dictating rather than reacting to the timing and location of engagements. A week before Iraq's recapture of Fao, President Khamenei was depicting the 'war of the cities' as a logical outgrowth of Iraq's incapacity to do anything else militarily: 'The Iraqi regime lacks the power even to defend itself. For years it had lost the power to mount an offensive on the battlefield. Today it does not even command defensive forces, as is evidenced by Halabja.'¹⁵ In Iranian eyes, the double blow was too suspiciously coincidental in timing to have happened accidentally. After all, it was generally known (and admitted) that the US was already providing Iraq with detailed intelligence data to aid Iraqi bombing runs on Iranian targets. Furthermore, both the range of Iraqi aircraft and the accuracy of their bombing against Iran's oil refineries and terminals had improved suspiciously of late. It was but a short step from there to seeing the actions on 17–18 April 1988 as being coordinated and even jointly planned. Rafsanjani accordingly depicted them as a plot.¹⁶

Nonetheless the fact remained that Iraqi troops had wrestled the initi-

¹⁴ Tehran home service, 6 October 1988, excerpted in BBC/ME/0277/A/2, 8 October 1988.

¹⁵ President Khamenei, sermon, Tehran University, 8 April 1988, excerpted in BBC/ME/0122/A/3, 11 April 1988.

¹⁶ See his interview with Tehran television 18 April 1988 in BBC/ME/0130/A/6, 20 April 1988.

ative away from Iran (which had been unable to mount an offensive in the appropriate period for the first time since the start of the war) and forced its troops to flee. Coming on the heels of the missiles and chemical weapons, it was evident that Iranian morale had finally cracked.

The one asset on which Iran had relied to compensate for inferiority in every other area had simply dissolved. This was of decisive importance because morale, commitment, zeal, dedication—whatever its label—could not, by its very nature, be reconstituted overnight. Unlike a shortage of aircraft or spare parts, it could not be made good or topped-up by outside suppliers.

Indicative of this shift in the respective motivation of the two sides were the tremors of discontent that were again emanating from within Iranian society. In May 1988 Mehdi Bazargan, the head of the Liberation Movement of Iran (the only 'opposition' party allowed by the Islamic republic), made public a scathing criticism of the government's policy of continuing the war. What distinguished this from earlier criticisms from the same source were the echoes it now audibly evoked in many sectors of society. For the stoical populace of the Islamic republic, economic hardship and other privations such as fuel rationing and electricity cuts were tolerable in the cause of victory, but not otherwise. Now there was precious little optimism about this goal evident even among the high priests of the war.

The scene was now set for a radical rethinking of policy. What lent it urgency was the evidence that Iran's soldiers were unwilling to continue the fight. Even in those cases where impending Iraqi attacks were publicised, as in Majnoon, the Iranian troops' commitment to defence was a shadow of their earlier performance. The string of Iraqi military victories after Fao—Shalamcheh, Mehran and Majnoon among others—only hastened Rafsanjani's determination to get Khomeini's approval for Iran's acceptance of a ceasefire.

The destruction of an Iran-Air airbus by a missile of a US naval vessel in early July 1988 provided a convenient occasion for the announcement of this decision. It gave Iran's leaders precisely the moral cover of martyrdom and suffering in the face of an unjust superior force they needed to camouflage the comprehensive defeat of their political goals. Khomeini, at least, could not dissemble the depth of the defeat.

If the war and the revolution had imperceptibly merged into one, and the war had proven virtually the only achievement of the revolution in nine years, what possible verdict on the revolution could now be

passed? Judged from the standpoint of traditional diplomacy, Iran's war effort had been a valiant but pointless exercise. Having elevated self-reliance to an absolute goal, Iran had found through its own immoderation that it was no longer just a goal, but a reality and a constraint with which its war effort had to struggle. The concepts of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, a nation tempered and forged in war and similar such romantic notions were the most that could be salvaged from a war that should never have occurred. Iran's inattention to the military balance had made war attractive to its rival neighbour. Similar inattention to the business of making peace at the optimum time ensured that Iran was to reach the conference table at the point of its maximum weakness. The major casualty of the war has been the credibility of the Islamic republic among its own rank and file. It will no longer be able to call effectively upon its populace for crusades and sacrifices, but will have to act more like a traditional state. It is for this reason that Hashemi Rafsanjani has indulged in preemptive self-criticism of past policies. It is for this reason too that reconstruction policies are particularly important. A peace dividend must be found for the supporters of the revolution if the virus of discontent is not to spread and affect the very legitimacy of the revolution. Whether or not future generations will commemorate the war as a glorious chapter in the revolution, the present generation may be forgiven for not doing so.

Peacemaking in Southern Africa: the Luanda–Pretoria tug-of-war

South Africa's signing of UN Security Council resolution 435 in 1978 (which spelled out the steps for granting independence to Namibia) raised expectations that peace was around the corner in Southern Africa. At the time Pretoria was on the defensive, reeling from the 1976 Soweto uprising and facing the threat of international sanctions; the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) was unquestionably the paramount political force in Namibia and poised to win the election called for in resolution 435; the rule of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in Angola extended to almost all parts of the country; and the MPLA's rival, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), poorly armed and trained, was confined to the small pocket in the sparsely populated southeastern corner of Angola, which the Portuguese referred to as 'the end of the world'. The Carter administration was confident that an independent Namibia would be a memorial of its term in office.

A decade later, with the signing of the 22 December 1988 Accord in New York by South Africa, Angola and Cuba, expectations have been raised once again that peace is in sight in Southern Africa. What happened during that decade, and how realistic are the prospects for peace?

The Reagan approach to Southern Africa was fashioned by Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. Crocker was convinced that South Africa's refusal to abandon Namibia could be attributed to Pretoria's unwillingness to respond to sticks, rather than carrots, and the high political cost to South African President P W Botha of granting independence to Namibia and the assumption that it was a price he would pay only if there were a sufficient reward. Thus was born the policy of 'constructive engagement' with its corollary policy of 'linkage' that coupled the withdrawal of Cuban troops in Angola to the independence of Namibia.¹

¹ For further details on constructive engagement and linkage, see: G J Bender, 'American policy toward Angola: a history of linkage', in G J Bender, J S Coleman and R L Sklar (eds), *African*

Constructive engagement was predicted upon four fundamentally incorrect assumptions about South Africa, namely, that South Africa wanted to leave Namibia as soon as possible; to establish peaceful relations with its neighbours in a regional 'constellation of states'; to reduce the number of Cuban troops and Soviet advisers in Angola; and to cooperate closely with Washington in realising these aims.

Pretoria, however, interpreted constructive engagement as giving tacit consent to conduct destructive attacks against its neighbours, especially against Angola and Mozambique. The result was predictable. The 15,000 troops in Angola at the time that Reagan was first elected swelled to approximately 50,000 by the end of 1988. (The number of Cuban troops in Angola from independence up until 1988 correlate closely with the magnitude of South African attacks against the People's Republic of Angola.)

According to Donald McHenry, the US Ambassador to the UN during the last two years of the Carter administration and its chief negotiator for Namibia, South Africa ultimately refused to cooperate in Geneva in January 1981 because it wanted to build up a credible non-SWAPO opposition in Namibia first.² In other words, Pretoria needed to buy time, and linkage provided the perfect vehicle. As Pretoria escalated the military conflict in Angola and the number of Cubans rose, pressure on South Africa to concede control over Namibia was reduced. Moreover, Pretoria played its diplomatic cards brilliantly by blaming Washington and Luanda for the failure of progress towards an independent Namibia.

What has changed? The short answer is that Pretoria changed its mind about its Namibia policy. The long answer concerns the events that led P W Botha to decide to leave Namibia. The key to understanding this change can be found on the Angolan battlefield.

The war in Angola to 1987³

Before 1981, UNITA's military operations were mainly confined to the sparsely populated southeastern part of Angola. During the 1980s, how-

Crisis Areas and US Foreign Policy, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985, pp 110-28; G J Bender, 'The Reagan administration and Southern Africa', *Atlantic Quarterly* 2 (3) autumn 1984, pp 235-47; and G J Bender, 'Angola and the United States: evolution of a policy', *TransAfrica Forum* 1 (1) summer 1982, pp 57-63.

² Private communication from Donald McHenry.

³ For a more detailed discussion of the war in Angola, see: G J Bender, 'The Eagle and the Bear in Angola', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489, January

ever, UNITA expanded its activities to all provinces in the country. Four factors help explain how UNITA was able to achieve this expansion:

1. The MPLA's failure to deliver minimal assistance to rural Angolans (over three-quarters of the population) alienated a sizeable portion of the population who could then be expected to be more open to appeals for an alternative government.⁴
2. South Africa greatly augmented its military and financial support of UNITA during the 1980s. Not only did the South African air force fly combat missions during major offensives in Angola but, according to Pretoria's Defence Minister, Magnus Malan, soldiers from the South African Defence Forces (SADF) fought 'side by side' with UNITA on the Angolan battlefield.
3. Zaire allowed UNITA to establish bases along its borders, reminiscent of those it had provided for the FNLA for almost two decades, which greatly facilitated UNITA operations in the northern and eastern parts of Angola, while the USA's upgrading of UNITA bases in Zaire further enhanced UNITA's operations in northeastern Angola.
4. The USA provided UNITA with at least \$45 million in military aid in 1986-88, including the infamous stinger anti-aircraft missiles.⁵ Although US aid did not necessarily help UNITA to expand its area of operations, it has certainly assisted Savimbi's troops to resist major MPLA offences, such as the battle for Mavinga in the autumn of 1987.

While UNITA was receiving increased assistance from South Africa and the USA, the MPLA is said to have obtained nearly 2 billion dollars' worth of sophisticated Soviet military equipment between 1985 and

1987, pp 123-32; G J Bender, 'American policy toward Angola', pp 110-28; and G J Bender, 'The Reagan administration and Southern Africa', pp 235-47. See also J Marcum's three perceptive articles in the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies' series *Africa Notes*: 'The politics of survival: UNITA in Africa', 8, 18 February 1983; 'Angola: a quarter century of war', 37, 21 December 1984; and 'United States options in Angola', 52, 20 December 1985. Much of the following sections 1988 is adapted from G J Bender, 'Washington's quest for enemies in Angola', in R J Bloomfield (ed) *Regional Conflict and US Policy: Angola and Mozambique*, Algonac, Michigan: Reference Publishers, 1988, pp 191-200.

⁴ Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos underscored the connection between failed economic policies and security questions in several speeches in recent years; see especially his speech of 17 August 1987.

⁵ US officials estimate that US aid accounts for only about 5 per cent of the aid to UNITA, with 95 per cent supplied by South Africa. See J Hoagland, 'Angola vows to work with US despite Bush commitment to Savimbi', *The Washington Post*, 14 January 1989.

1988. Perhaps more important is the fact that the government's military forces made great strides in learning how to use their new equipment effectively, including MIG-23 jets. Well-trained Angolan pilots began to replace Cuban pilots and their success against Pretoria's aging Mirage jets in 1987 denied South Africa the near monopoly in air superiority it had enjoyed previously. South African officers have also reluctantly admitted that the MPLA ground troops acquitted themselves well in battles against the SADF.⁶ One significant result of the Angolan military's improved fighting capacity was the displacement of UNITA between mid-1986 and the end of 1987 from significant areas in the southern and eastern parts of the country where they had previously operated more or less at will. Particularly disturbing to UNITA's external patrons was the loss of control over all major cities in the Cazombo Salient down to Cuito-Cuanavale, which UNITA had taken in 1984-85. Some officials in Washington expressed grave concern about this turn of events, especially since they coincided with the period of US aid. One senior official, close to the US operation, voiced his distress that if UNITA did not regain its lost initiative, it would be difficult to sustain support in Congress for the covert assistance.

Thus, by the end of 1987, the military situation in Angola was confused. Although the MPLA defeat at Mavinga was a humiliating *dé-hâcle*, it did not significantly alter the overall picture on the ground.⁷ Each side was put on the defensive in areas it had previously 'controlled'—UNITA in the south and east and the MPLA in the north and parts of the central areas. Both armies managed to improve their fighting capacity considerably, but the war remained locked in a hopeless stalemate. Nevertheless, each side appeared to believe that if it could capture the military initiative in 1988, it would be able to improve its position at the negotiating table.

Prospects for successful negotiations

International attempts to negotiate peaceful settlements of the conflicts in Southern Africa were based on a number of shared premises. Whether the principals in these negotiations were the UN, the Western Contact Group (USA, Great Britain, France, West Germany and Canada), the

⁶ Numerous stories appeared in newspapers in 1987 that referred to South Africa's growing respect for the fighting capabilities of Angola's armed forces. An excellent review can be found in 'Angola: a battle for Africa', *Africa Confidential* 28 (20) 7 October 1987, pp 1-3.

⁷ For an account of the MPLA defeat at Mavinga see J Marcum, 'Regional security in Southern Africa', *Survival* 30 (January-February 1988), pp 10-11.

Carter administration, the Reagan administration or the Angolans, fundamental assumptions have been made in every attempt to solve the problems diplomatically rather than militarily.⁸ These assumptions are that both South Africa and Angola have serious security concerns; the Cubans in Angola help protect the country from a major South African invasion; the Angolan government will not feel secure while South Africa has easy access through Namibia to carry out attacks and occupy key areas of southern provinces; and Pretoria manifests grave concern over the presence of large numbers of Cuban combat troops in Angola and insists it will not withdraw its troops and illegal administration from Namibia until the Cuban troops are removed from the region.

The Carter administration, working through the Western Contact Group, approached the problem by focusing on the cornerstone of a solution, namely to persuade South Africa to agree to withdraw from Namibia. This was achieved in September 1978 when Pretoria accepted UN Security Council resolution 435, which called for an end to the illegal occupation of Namibia. Pretoria then added a number of conditions for implementation of resolution 435 that the Contact Group was unable to satisfy.

The Reagan administration, led by its chief strategist Chester Crocker, attempted to negotiate a package deal that would link the premises outlined above. Although the linkage strategy went through several machinations, at the heart of the approach was the fundamental belief that the security concerns of the two principal parties (Angola and South Africa) must be satisfied before any realistic hope of success could be envisioned. Despite the almost universal criticism of the linkage approach, it is interesting to note that it did not essentially differ from the plan advanced by Angola and Cuba in a joint declaration signed on 4 February 1982, in which the Angolan and Cuban foreign ministers asserted that Cuban combat troops would be withdrawn from Angola once South Africa ceased its military threats against the Luanda government and implemented resolution 435 (that is, withdrew from Namibia).

Not unexpectedly, Pretoria initially insisted that the Cubans must leave before the South African withdrawal from Namibia, while Luanda demanded that South Africa fully implement resolution 435 before Angola would initiate a withdrawal of the Cuban combat forces. Since 1982, US officials have held dozens of negotiating sessions with South

⁸ For further background on the attempts to broker a diplomatic solution in Angola and Namibia, see the sources cited in footnote 3.

African and Angolan officials in an attempt to narrow this gap by formulating a timetable, acceptable to both sides, that would allow for a parallel withdrawal of South Africans from Namibia and Cubans from Angola. For most of this period, the approach of the Reagan administration was based on the belief that Pretoria was acting in good faith when it claimed that it was willing to leave Namibia. Thus, most administration efforts were focused on Angola in an attempt to obtain from the government in Luanda a timetable that would be acceptable to the South African government.

The Reagan strategy was seriously handicapped by domestic political constraints. The obvious key to success would have been for Washington to offer Luanda incentives for narrowing the timetable, ranging from diplomatic recognition to some assistance in the area of security. Fear of a right-wing backlash, however, discouraged the administration's chief strategists from offering much more to the Angolan government than the promise that if Luanda showed flexibility on the timetable, Washington would ensure that South Africa upheld its side of the bargain. This amounted to telling the Angolan government that it would have to stake its security on the belief that both South Africa and the USA were acting in good faith. Prior to 1987, the maximum that Luanda was willing to risk was contained in its *Plataforma*, spelled out in a letter from President dos Santos to the UN Secretary-General in late 1984, which proposed a three-year timetable for the withdrawal of a portion of the Cuban combat troops.

Little progress was registered in the negotiations after the announcement of the *Plataforma*. The three-year withdrawal timetable satisfied neither Washington nor Pretoria, and the Reagan administration attempted to hammer out a compromise. The USA suggested that the timetable for the Cuban withdrawal should correspond roughly to the timetable envisioned for the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia under UN Security Council resolution 435, so that 80 per cent of the Cuban troops south of the thirteenth parallel would be withdrawn within one year. Initially this was rejected by both Luanda and Pretoria, the latter insisting that the Cuban withdrawal should take place in a matter of weeks, not years or even one year. By the end of 1985, however, South Africa showed signs that it was interested in the compromise as a basis for negotiating and wanted Washington to obtain Luanda's response. During the ensuing talks in December 1985, the Angolan government asked the USA to induce South Africa to demonstrate its good faith by, for example, setting a date for Namibian independence.

Pretoria responded on 4 March 1986 with an announcement that set August 1986 as the target date for Namibian independence. By this time, however, the Angolan government appeared to have lost interest in pursuing the talks. The explanation for their new silence can be attributed to some contention within the MPLA over how to proceed in the negotiations and to developments in the USA that undoubtedly contributed to the uncertainty in Luanda.

The US Senate's repeal of the Clark Amendment in July 1985, which had prohibited covert military intervention in Angola, and Jonas Savimbi's highly visible and successful visit to Washington in early 1986, clearly heightened Luanda's anxieties over its security. Crocker and the State Department lost control of the policy to right-wing forces in the Congress who transformed the momentum generated by Savimbi's visit into support for a covert programme of military assistance for UNITA. The State Department recognised that such aid would probably sink the negotiations, which led them to work hard behind the scenes to prevent covert support for Savimbi's forces. They were impotent, however, to stop the frenzy in Washington to support the 'Reagan doctrine' of covert military assistance to 'freedom fighters', especially since the US right wing considered UNITA to be the group of 'freedom fighters' with the greatest prospects for success in overthrowing a Soviet-backed regime.⁹

US military support for UNITA in early 1986 was too much for the PLG to accept. Angola broke off all negotiations with Washington and announced that it no longer accepted the legitimacy of the Reagan administration as a broker in the negotiations since the administration had become partisan in the Angolan war. Having abandoned the diplomatic track, Luanda turned to the military option, investing over one billion dollars in weapons and training. This policy, however, was poorly timed, since the dramatic fall in the price of oil (which provides Luanda with over 80 per cent of its foreign exchange) forced the government to adopt stringent economic austerity measures. These measures alienated the Angolan population which felt, with almost no exceptions, that it was already making economic sacrifices beyond the point of

Secretary of State George Shultz deserves a portion of the blame for the State Department's failure to stop a move to provide military assistance to UNITA. Once President Reagan began to include UNITA in his speeches advocating military support for 'freedom fighters' in early 1985, Shultz dutifully echoed the President in his own speeches. This undermined his later opposition to covert support since, if it were true that UNITA was a group of freedom fighters deserving support, as he had asserted in his speeches, then why should the Reagan administration deny it them?

reasonable acceptance. By mid-1987 it was apparent to dos Santos that the economic situation in the country was deteriorating and that the government would either have to ask for a further belt-tightening or else radically restructure the economy. It was also clear that the pace of military expenditures would have to be greatly curtailed. One possible alternative would be to resume the negotiations and once again attempt to achieve some major solutions to the government's problems diplomatically, rather than militarily. The challenge for dos Santos was how to accomplish this without losing face and support from his main backers.

Luanda returns to the table

The Angolan government decided to resume negotiations with the USA in mid-July 1987 and invited Chester Crocker to visit Luanda. Foreign Minister Afonso Van Dunem (Mbinda) was Crocker's interlocutor, appearing for the first time as the chief Angolan negotiator. Crocker had been led to believe that Luanda had developed a new, more flexible position, but what he heard was little more than a rehash of the *Plataforma*. Disappointed at the lack of progress, Crocker announced that the trip had been a 'waste of time'.

President dos Santos apparently decided to take charge of the negotiations himself and went to Havana on 4 August 1987 to discuss a new strategy for the talks with Fidel Castro, which he announced the following week in Lusaka at a meeting of the front line states. That approach called for an agreement that would have to be signed by representatives of Angola, Cuba, South Africa and SWAPO, carried out under the auspices of the UN Security Council.

Although there was much speculation at the time as to whether the inclusion by dos Santos of Cuba in the talks represented a clever manoeuvre on the part of Luanda to coopt Havana, or vice versa, the result clearly opened the way for a more flexible and open Angolan negotiating position during Crocker's meeting with dos Santos in early September 1987.¹⁰ Angola shortened the timetable for the withdrawal of the first 20,000 Cuban troops from three to two years. The USA wanted to reduce this further to one year. This was one of the subjects that Crocker discussed during his surprise visit to Brussels in late September 1987, while President dos Santos was on a state visit to Belgium,

¹⁰ The inclusion of the Cubans in the negotiations made it easier for Havana to save face in any deal that would lead to a substantial troop withdrawal from Angola.

a meeting which resulted in Angola's contracting the withdrawal timetable to eighteen months.

But the Reagan administration wanted Luanda to be even more flexible and to accept terms such as those presented in the compromise in late 1985, which called for a time frame of roughly one year, paralleling the period during which South Africa would withdraw from Namibia under the provisions of resolution 435. During that year approximately 80 per cent of the Cuban troops south of the thirteenth parallel would be withdrawn, while a schedule for withdrawal of the remaining 20 per cent would have to be presented at a later date. This was more or less the minimal package that Washington believed should be acceptable to Pretoria. If South Africa were to reject a deal that Washington found acceptable, the stage would be set for a collision course.

A number of individuals in the Reagan administration were looking for an excuse to come down hard on Pretoria, and they saw a rejection of an 'acceptable compromise' on linkage as the perfect opportunity. Privately they stated that if they were prevented from doing so by those in the administration who preferred not to offend Pretoria, the issue would probably move to Congress. If the negotiations failed because of South African intransigence, the administration would not be in a position to ward off congressional calls for further punitive sanctions against South Africa and greatly increased economic support for the frontline states. For the first time in years, if Pretoria refused to cooperate with Washington, it could find itself considerably more isolated not only from Western Europe but also from the USA.

None of this would transpire, however, unless Luanda agreed to accept a package approximating the US compromise. Some in the Angolan government argued that a one-year timetable was too risky for the withdrawal of the first 80 per cent of the Cuban combat troops. Yet, if South Africa accepted the US package, Luanda would accomplish the goal it had sought for the last decade, namely to bring an end to South Africa's presence in Namibia. This would not end Pretoria's aid to UNITA, but would curtail it considerably, especially South Africa's ability to employ its troops and aircraft in battles such as those at Cangamba and Mavinga. On the other hand, if South Africa rejected the compromise, Luanda risked nothing and by its own acceptance could set in motion a process that would deeply strain relations between Washington and Pretoria.

Dos Santos' new course

By 1987 the war, together with failures of economic management, had produced a catastrophic situation in rural Angola that could not be ignored. During his August 1987 speech on the economy, dos Santos estimated that the war had resulted in 12 billion dollars' worth of damage between 1975 and 1987 and had cost over 60,000 Angolan lives. A report published by UNICEF in early 1987 estimated that the war had left almost one-tenth of the population homeless and had caused some 150,000 Angolans to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The UNICEF report also stated that tens of thousands of Angolan children died each year from starvation and even more were suffering from acute malnutrition.¹¹ The US Committee on Refugees, a private organisation based in Washington, issued a report that echoed the UNICEF conclusions and suggested that 200,000 tons of grain were needed by early 1988 in order to avoid catastrophic starvation and malnutrition in Angola's rural areas.¹²

President dos Santos laid out a radically new course for the economy at a meeting of party and government officials in mid-August 1987. Conceding that excessive socialist planning and bureaucratisation of economic management were responsible for much of Angola's economic malaise, he announced plans to remove the state and party from economic management in many important sectors. Private enterprise would be strongly encouraged, especially in agriculture, trade, transport and service; and prices and wages would be determined by market forces rather than by arbitrary government edicts. He also made clear that foreign investment, especially from the West, would be actively sought.

Many observers were surprised by dos Santos' announcement that Angola intended to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Previously, those Angolans who advocated IMF membership had been regarded with disfavour. Dos Santos secured important support for his country's IMF application from each of the leaders of the five Western European countries he visited in September 1987 (France, Belgium, Portugal, Italy and West Germany), all of whom pledged to help sponsor Angola's application for membership.

¹¹ UNICEF, *Children on the Front Line, the impact of apartheid, destabilization and warfare on children in southern and South Africa*, New York: UN Children's Fund, March 1987, see especially pp 6-27.

¹² US Committee for Refugees, *Uprooted Angolans: from crisis to catastrophe* Washington DC: American Council for Nationalities Service, August 1987, pp 1-30.

While implementation of the new economic and financial stabilisation programme was deferred to 1 January 1988, its origins go back to 1984 when Angolan and Hungarian economic experts suggested new directions for the Angolan economy. The resultant package, similar to the reforms announced by dos Santos in August 1987, was adopted at the MPLA party conference in January 1985 and ratified during the Second Party Congress in December 1985. Yet nothing happened for almost two years. This is explained, in part, by the high prices for oil which enabled the government to use expensive imports to compensate for many of the country's economic deficiencies. The dramatic fall in oil prices changed all that by reducing foreign exchange earnings by almost half in 1986 compared to the previous year.

Implementation of the reforms was also delayed by some orthodox party members who feared that the new programme amounted to a betrayal of socialism. Their objections were disregarded, however, as dissatisfaction with economic deprivations became increasingly widespread, even among members of the central committee. In the spring of 1987, President dos Santos had tried to demonstrate to the Angolan people his concern about their lack of food by removing the ministers of Foreign and Internal Commerce from their positions. But making scapegoats of these two ministers gave no one reason to expect economic improvements in their lives. Dos Santos, wisely noting in his August speech that no revolution can be consolidated without first satisfying the material needs of the people, decided that the only way to stem the widespread alienation in the country was to alter the economy dramatically from top to bottom.

1988: the year of decision

Success in the US-brokered negotiations had proved elusive up until 1988, because the participants had found it easier to increase military pressure than to make political concessions. But the escalating size and intensity of the military battles in southeastern Angola in late 1987 raised the stakes considerably. For the first time there was concern that sizeable numbers of UNITA and MPLA troops were, at different stages, in danger of being annihilated. Suddenly the 'cosy little war' became very dangerous. Crocker would not hope for success until all sides concluded that prevailing military policies were not only becoming increasingly costly in terms of lives and material, but also futile; and that all sides had to be able to claim a victory in order to sell an agreement to their

respective constituencies. At the beginning of 1988 the situations of the contending parties with respect to those two factors were as follows:

MPLA

The Angolan government suffered its largest military losses of the war in late 1987, during its failed attempt to capture the southeastern town of Mavinga.¹³ Moreover, government troops were under siege at Cuito Cuanavale, approximately 100 miles north of Mavinga, where they had retreated. It became clear that a 'final offensive' against UNITA could not be successful as long as South Africa was prepared to commit its ground troops and air force to the defence of Savimbi's forces. The government was on the defensive both economically and politically, and it needed a major victory in at least one sphere to restore morale and to gain political courage (to make difficult choices at the negotiating table)

Cuba

The Cubans had suffered the same fate as the MPLA at Mavinga. This battle not only involved large numbers of Cuban troops, but Fidel Castro later criticised the Soviet Union for pursuing misguided battle strategies.¹⁴ Cuba was well aware of the futility of the military option, but it wanted a major victory before withdrawing its troops. Cuba's image in Angola had become tarnished over the years, as the Cubans became the scapegoats for many of the country's military and economic maladies.¹⁵ Cuba needed a major military victory in order to reclaim its position as the successful defender of Angolan sovereignty against South African aggression.

South Africa

South Africa decided to turn its military success at Mavinga into a

¹³ An interesting account of the battle can be found in 'Angola: a battle for Africa', *Africa Confidential* 28 (20), 7 October 1987, pp 1-3.

¹⁴ See, for example, Castro's important speech on the anniversary of the attack on the Moncada Barracks (26 July 1988) in which he referred to mistakes made in Angola: 'I believe that history one day will tell everything: what mistakes were made and why. I will only say that Cuba had no responsibility for those mistakes.' Quoted in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Latin America*, 28 July 1988, p 16. General Rafael del Pino, a high ranking Cuban officer with considerable experience in Angola who defected to the USA several years ago, reported that Cuba strongly opposed the Soviet military strategy in the 1985 offensive from Cuito Cuanavale towards Mavinga, which del Pino called a total failure, affirming that the Angolan troops 'were annihilated'. Rafael del Pino, *General del Pino Speaks*, Washington DC: Cuban American National Foundation, 1987, p 25.

¹⁵ G J Bender, 'Past, present, and future perspectives of Cuba in Africa', *Cuban Studies* 10, July 1980, pp 44-54.

major rout of MPLA troops by attacking the key town of Cuito Cuanavale. This proved to be a fundamental error. Pretoria suffered unprecedented losses of both men and equipment (especially aircraft) in the abortive attempt to capture the town. While South African newspaper editorials across the political spectrum were questioning the wisdom of the operations in Angola, and especially the high cost in terms of lives, in January 1988 the Defence Minister, Magnus Malan, received a secret report suggesting that to take Cuito Cuanavale could perhaps result in the deaths of as many as 200 white soldiers. This figure was unacceptably high. In sum, South Africa could claim a great victory at Mavinga, but it would be an illusion to believe that this battle signalled the possibility of a final military triumph.

Soviet Union

For several years Soviet experts on Southern Africa had observed privately that the MPLA was incapable of a military victory. If there were any who doubted this fact in Moscow before Mavinga, there could not have been any afterwards.¹⁶ As long as oil prices were high, the Angolan government could afford to pay for most of the arms it received from the Soviet Union; consequently the war was not a major drain on Soviet resources. Once the price of oil had plummeted, however, Luanda stopped paying for the arms and by early 1988 the Angolan debt to the Soviet Union stood at between 2.5 and 3 billion dollars. Angola now became a target of the 'new thinking' in the USSR, which called for a reduction of expensive military commitments abroad in order to foster economic growth at home. Moreover, Moscow could point to very few tangible benefits derived from its commitment in Angola. On the other hand, Moscow could not pursue a course of action that would appear to be abandoning two close allies—Cuba and the MPLA—on the Angolan battlefields. The only acceptable way out for Moscow would be through the successful conclusion of the Crocker negotiations.¹⁷

The USA

Time was running out for Crocker as the final year of the Reagan administration began. If the frequent claims of success for administra-

¹⁶ I have been receiving reports to this effect since 1985 from friends who have visited the Soviet Union, and I was able to confirm them during my own visit to Moscow in December 1987.

¹⁷ Secretary M S Gorbachev, in his address delivered on 2 November 1987 on the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, pointedly called for collective efforts to diffuse the conflict in Southern Africa. The translation of his speech can be found in *Southern Africa Record* 49, December 1987.

tion policy in Southern Africa were ever going to be proven, it would have to be as a result of a Herculean effort by Crocker in 1988. All branches and agencies in the US government had long been convinced that UNITA could not win a military victory in Angola (even with South African assistance). While few officials in Washington believed South African claims that it had saved UNITA from annihilation in late 1987, prognostications for UNITA's military future were at best lugubrious. The more UNITA's prospects suffered in Angola, the more the right wing in Congress tried to pass legislation that would 'punish' the Angolan government, thus compromising and possibly threatening to capsize Crocker's negotiations.¹⁸ The Assistant Secretary of State needed to achieve some momentum in the talks, and his best hope was that the military exhaustion suffered by all sides would stimulate negotiations.

Two events occurred in January 1988 that helped shape the outcome of the negotiations. The first was that no matter how hard the South African Defence Forces (SADF) and UNITA pounded the decimated town of Cuito Cuanavale, the defending troops (overwhelmingly MPLA, not Cuban) withstood the daily assaults. This turned out to be the government's 'Stalingrad' or 'Iwo Jima' — a major military and moral victory for the beleaguered MPLA army. It was the victory that the government had been seeking in order to return to the negotiating table with renewed strength. The second development occurred when a Cuban Politburo member, Jorge Risquet, joined the negotiations with Crocker in Luanda.

Initially the Americans had mixed feelings about Cuban participation in the negotiations. They were not sure that the Cubans were really prepared to withdraw from Angola and therefore feared that they would be 'obstructionists'. Crocker also worried that even if the Cubans were cooperative, their presence would make any solution almost impossible for the right wing in Congress to accept. Another concern involved tensions between the Angolans and Cubans over earlier negotiations.

¹⁸ Some members of Congress were so frustrated with the lack of progress in the negotiations that they were prepared to use Angola to send symbolic messages to Moscow and Havana (whom they incorrectly blamed for the stalemate). Apparently oblivious to the possible negative impact on US efforts to bring about a diplomatic solution to the problems of the region, and regardless of the financially disastrous effects on US investments in Angola, they turned their frustration towards the US companies operating in Angola. For example, in mid 1988, Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole and Dennis DeConcini co-sponsored a bill in Senate that would have prohibited US firms from operating in, or doing business with, Angola. On the Senate floor, Dole admitted that he harboured 'no illusions' that his bill (s 1128) would 'mean an end to Angolan oil production or sales, or lead directly and quickly to the ousting of the Cubans'. See the *Congressional Record-Senate*, 19 May 1987, p s6748.

In a few instances the Angolan government had failed to brief Cuba after secret negotiating sessions, which had engendered some distrust in Havana. US officials ultimately concluded that unless the negotiations included coordination (and trust) between the Angolans and Cubans, there was no hope for a settlement. Thus, the Cubans participated in all general negotiating sessions throughout 1988.¹⁹

Although Cuba gained considerable respectability during the 1988 negotiations, it still could not claim to have won a major military victory since 1976. Some, including myself, wondered if it would be possible for Cuba to withdraw from Angola with its tarnished legacy. Clearly not oblivious to this fact, Havana undertook a major build-up of its forces and equipment in southwestern Angola, approximately 400 miles west of Mavinga. The build-up threatened to derail the negotiations as South African diplomats complained bitterly in May at Brazzaville and again in June at Cairo. Both times the South Africans insisted on a guarantee that Cuban and Angolan troops would not attack the Calueque Dam on the Angolan–Namibian border. The dam was originally a joint Portuguese–South African project built in colonial times in order to provide electricity and water for the peoples of southern Angola and northern Namibia. Two days after the June negotiating sessions in Cairo, Cuban and Angolan forces attacked the dam, killing at least twelve South African soldiers. This was the biggest loss that South Africa had suffered in a single battle inside Angola, and since it appeared that the South Africans were not in a position to match the Angolan and Cuban weaponry, Pretoria thought it wise to retreat into Namibia.

For several weeks following the attack on Calueque, officials in Washington speculated as to whether South Africa would counter-attack. Washington believed that South Africa had the capacity to crush the joint Angolan–Cuban force along the border, but it was unclear whether Pretoria was prepared to endure large losses among its fighting forces. The South African response was set by President Botha who argued that it was far wiser to defend the area from the Namibian side of the border (where Pretoria clearly enjoyed military superiority) than from the Angolan side where they were at a distinct military disadvantage. The Angolans and Cubans took a big gamble in the attack, but it paid dividends. South Africa was effectively checkmated across the border.

¹⁹ For an extremely useful and detailed article on the negotiations during September 1988, see G Gunn, 'A guide to the intricacies of the Angola–Namibia negotiations', *CSIS Africa Notes* 90, 8 September 1988, pp 1–16.

After thirteen years, Cuba could again proclaim that it had fulfilled its 'internationalist duties' by helping Angola to preserve its sovereignty against South African aggression. Cuba had finally won its victory (as South Africa had at Mavinga and the MPLA at Cuito Cuanavale). Moreover, Pretoria's failure to take Cuito Cuanavale and the subsequent defeat at Calueque helped convince South Africa, perhaps for the first time, that it could no longer operate militarily with impunity inside Angola. Previously, South Africa had avoided tough political decisions during negotiations by conducting military attacks on Angola. Now it appeared that South Africa would finally have to make political choices. Calueque proved to be the decisive turning point in the negotiations, leading to the signing of the final Accord in New York on 22 December 1988 by Angola, Cuba and South Africa.²⁰

Considerable speculation has followed the signing of the Accord in New York as to whether or not South Africa will respect the agreement. Given South Africa's violation of previous agreements with respect to Angola, this concern is understandable. Yet it has been clear for more than a decade that South Africa would eventually withdraw from Namibia. The question has only been when, and I believe that the time has come. Although there will be the inevitable delays, manoeuvres, roadblocks and misunderstandings, Pretoria's own weaknesses and the concern of international forces—including considerable consultation and coordination between Washington and Moscow—make South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia over the next year inevitable.

A luta continua

²⁰ Between March and December 1988 sixteen negotiating sessions were held in Luanda, Brazzaville, London, Cairo, Geneva and New York. Crocker noted at one point that little was accomplished when the participants were represented by their foreign ministers, who tended to play more towards their domestic constituencies than focus on serious compromises. Most of the sessions were therefore billed as 'working groups', which was another way of saying that the politicians should stay home and send negotiators instead. This strategy was wise and effective. In the end, all three sides could claim victories on the Angolan battlefield and at the negotiating table—a prerequisite for a settlement.

Winning by the rules: law and warfare in the 1980s

'It bothers me to hear high-ranking officers say we have to humanise the war ...' Thus said Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa of El Salvador, where active-service officers are said to disobey orders to respect human rights because of their frustration with a policy that has not proved effective in countering the guerrillas. 'War is inhuman; either you win or lose.'¹ The object of this article is to consider whether or not he is right. Are there rules applicable to the conduct of hostilities? Can there be rules if fighting is a matter of winning or losing? In what sense can one speak of law in relation to war; are they not contradictions in terms? The physical and psychological scars of the victims of torture, the continuing agony of those whose relatives have 'disappeared', the listless apathy of refugees with no belief in any future to enable them to improve the present, the limbless children of Afghanistan or Mozambique—all these poignant images raise the question 'where was the law there?'

Some might concede that there can be rules between soldiers on defined battlefields, while calling into question the possibility of law in the context of contemporary armed conflicts.² They would suggest that changes in the nature of warfare, the lack of battle zones, the prevalence of unorthodox fighters, the involvement of the civilian population in contemporary conflicts and the availability of weapons of a fundamentally new level of destructiveness, all mean that the gentlemanly codes of behaviour once thought to exist even in war are simply no longer realisable or relevant. This article seeks to examine what contemporary conflicts in the Third World tell us about regulating war by law. In particular, it examines what rules states have chosen to accept and whether they have respected their legal obligations in practice. The claim that military efficiency is incompatible with such rules will be subjected to scrutiny.

¹ Quoted in *The Times* (London), 22 June 1988. See also *The Independent* (London) 17 October 1988.

² P. Verri, 'Institutions Militaires: le problème de l'enseignement du droit des conflits armés et de l'adaptation des règlements à ses prescriptions humanitaires', in C. Swinarski (ed), *Studies and Essays on International Humanitarian Law and Red Cross Principles* in honour of Jean Pictet, The Hague: Nijhoff/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 1984, p. 603, especially pp. 608–10.

For reasons of space, it should be made clear at the outset that this article will not address the question of the use of nuclear weapons, whether strategic or battlefield, nor the possession of such weapons as a deterrent, nor the establishment of 'nuclear-free zones' by one or more states. This survey of international humanitarian law as it affects current Third World conflicts will be able to point to only some of the major issues. There will be no scope for a detailed analysis of common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, which is the single most important provision since it applies to internal armed conflicts. Nor will there be an analysis of the practices which pose political but not legal problems. State terrorism is quite clearly unlawful,³ as is the taking of hostages,⁴ the imposition of collective penalties and kidnappings.⁵ The international legal community has yet to come to terms with the question of the effective legal responsibility of insurgent groups for such acts; that of the state is relatively straightforward. One of the difficulties lies in the reluctance of states to afford insurgent groups even such element of recognition as would enable responsibility to be attributed to them. In the discussion of combatant status, there is not space for discussion of the status of mercenaries, who are the subject of continuing negotiations under the auspices of the UN.⁶

Whilst the focus of the article will primarily be on the rules that apply to the conduct of hostilities, the *ius in bello*, it is nevertheless necessary to make reference to the law which regulates the resort to armed force in the first place, the *ius ad bellum*. It will also be important to establish the relationship between the two bodies of rules.

The right to resort to armed force

Following the failure of the attempt to outlaw war in the Briand-Kellogg Pact of 1928, the UN set itself a more modest goal. The unilat-

³ State terrorism is the intentional or foreseeable provoking of fear in the civilian population by means of arbitrary acts which are usually unlawful in themselves by agents of the state or persons operating with the authority or knowledge of the organs of the state. If such actions (for example, torture, arbitrary killings or unlawful detention) take place during an armed conflict, they fall under humanitarian law and such human rights law as is applicable.

⁴ The taking of hostages is proscribed under Protocol I, Article 75(2)(c) and Protocol II, Article 4(2)(c).

⁵ The Annex to Hague Convention IV, Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, Article 50, proscribes general or collective penalties as does Protocol I, Article 75(2)(c) and Protocol II, Article 4(2)(b). Kidnapping involves the detention of a person without lawful excuse; this represents a breach of humanitarian law.

⁶ Ad Hoc Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. The reports of the Committee are to be found *Official Records of the General Assembly (GAOR)*, Supplement No 43.

eral use or threatened use of armed force was prohibited under Articles 2(3), (4) and 51 of the UN Charter, save in self-defence or in response to an act of aggression. The right to resort unilaterally to self-defence was to be an interim one, pending collective action against the aggressor by the UN. The absence of the political will to enable such a scheme to work is evidenced by the failure to establish a UN standing army as envisaged by Chapter VII of the Charter.

Yet, the failures are not solely attributable to a lack of political will; some of the causes lie within the complexity of inter-state relations. It is not always obvious, for example, which party is the aggressor.⁷ War is not a purposeless activity; states resort to armed force for some reason, and whilst the vindication of legal rights may, in some situations, be a factor, it is never more than that. The combination and interrelationship of all the considerations that lead a state to resort to armed force are essentially political. It is therefore not surprising that the UN was unable to prevent the outbreak of hostilities between Iran and Iraq, the Argentine invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas or the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. It is not so much a failure of international law as a recognition that, at present, states are not prepared to subject themselves to legal regulation in this sphere, however vociferously they invoke the law when they are victims of its breach! This is merely a reflection of the decentralised and relatively immature level of development of international society. Medieval barons were not notably keen on the legal regulation of their disputes or on accepting the authority of the king.

This does not mean that the UN has no role to play in inter-state disputes. It provides a useful forum where parties in dispute can meet and negotiate when they have closed conventional diplomatic channels. The authority of a Security Council resolution can enable parties to accept a compromise without losing face. Finally, if anything has justified the office of the Secretary-General, it must surely be the tireless and patient exercise of his good offices to obtain a ceasefire between Iran and Iraq. The superpowers made it possible or removed impediments but they were not able to achieve a ceasefire. The UN does,

⁷ The General Assembly's Resolution on the Definition of Aggression 1974, GA Res 3314 (XXIX), GAOR 29th Session, Supp 21, provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of aggression. It can, nevertheless, be difficult to establish whether a preemptive strike, for example, is an aggressive act or a legitimate exercise of a right of anticipatory self-defence. A second example would be establishing according to the facts whether an intervening power was actually asked for assistance by the authorities with power to do so in another state (eg the USSR in Afghanistan; the USA in Grenada).

therefore, have a role to play but it is essentially a diplomatic or political one, rather than a legal one.

The disputes considered so far have been inter-state ones but the most common use of force in the 1980s is within the land territory of one state. The activities of the UN in this sphere are even more limited. Under Article 2(7) of the Charter, the organisation cannot '... intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or ... require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the ... Charter.' The apparent simplicity of this formulation is somewhat complicated by the practice of the UN. Some matters arising within the land territory of one state are nevertheless not regarded as internal. Thus, the struggle for independence within certain 'colonies' or 'non-self-governing territories' is seen as a legitimate matter of international concern, as is that within the remaining trust territory, Namibia. This is, in part, justified by express reference in Articles 1(2), 55 and 56 of the Charter to self-determination, but it is, above all, a reflection of the political attitudes of many members of the General Assembly, who have themselves obtained their independence only within the last thirty years. This concern with 'self-determination' does not extend to groups within independent states. Whilst the General Assembly resolutions and treaty provisions referring to the right suggest that it is to be exercised, as a matter of law, by 'nations' and 'peoples', UN practice makes it clear that, in fact, it is confined to 'colonies', governed from outside the land territory.⁸ There was no UN support for the struggles in Katanga and Biafra. The Eritreans are similarly denied UN support, even though they claim to be fighting for 'self-determination'. Support for the struggle in East Timor is waning, to judge by voting patterns in the General Assembly, and that situation is, in any event, unlike the others cited in that, following independence, the territory was forcibly assimilated by another state. The right to 'self-determination' is not, therefore, a secessionist charter. Within the limits described, however, the UN does not view struggles in the name of the principle of self-determination as internal, even if they take place within the land territory of only one state.

⁸ For example, Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Territories and Peoples; 1970 Programme of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration; 1965 Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty; 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. See also Article 1 common to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

A second complicating factor is where the situation within a state represents a threat to international peace and security, even if no other state is involved. If the Security Council determines that such a threat exists, it may take action under Chapter VII of the Charter, including enforcement action under Article 42. Were any effective action to be taken against the South African regime, it would presumably be based on such a line of reasoning. Since a prerequisite is a determination by the Security Council of the existence of such a threat, it would require the concurring votes of the permanent members, who have a right of veto.⁹

Another factor, which either exists in its own right or which may be subsumed in the previous one, is where there is a record of gross and systematic violation of human rights within a state. Such a state of affairs can come within the international domain since one of the purposes of the UN, under Articles 1(3), 55 and 56 of the Charter, is the promotion and protection of human rights. It is less clear if this would justify enforcement action on the grounds of a threat to international peace and security.¹⁰ Indirect support for the proposition may be found in the diplomatic silence which greeted Tanzania's invasion of Uganda, which successfully sought the replacement of Idi Amin by Milton Obote. Again, the Israeli raid on Entebbe Airport in Uganda led to relatively insignificant condemnations, particularly when one remembers the vociferous protests that usually greet any extra-territorial action by Israel. The explanation presumably lies in the alleged complicity of Ugandan soldiers in the detaining of hostages.¹¹ If an appalling human rights record can justify the intervention of the UN in a situation which would otherwise be regarded as internal, one may ask why nothing was done about the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea. Not only was no action taken against this regime, but after the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, the Western powers refused for some time to recognise any authority other than Pol Pot.¹² The example of

Article 27(3) UN Charter. The permanent members are France, PRC, UK, USA and USSR. Their power of veto has prevented effective UN action being taken against the wishes of one or more of the five in the conflicts in Kampuchea, Ethiopia, Chad, Angola, Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

States have not invoked the gross and systematic violation of human rights before the Security Council as a ground for enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter. This may be based on political considerations but it has the effect of undermining the legal argument.

Y Ofer, *Operation Thunder: the Entebbe raid*, London: Penguin, 1976, p. 38.

J Pilger, *Heroes*, London: Pan Books, 1987, chapter 34. On the attitude of European powers to alleged Iraqi attacks against Kurds involving the use of unlawful weapons and breaches of the principles of proportionality and distinction, see *The Independent* 3 September 1988, and note 57 infra.

Kampuchea shows clearly enough that alleged concern for the violation of human rights is in fact a cover for politically motivated action or inaction.

We have seen that the UN is primarily intended to deal with inter-state disputes but that certain types of internal situations may come within its purview. We cannot leave the issue of the role of the UN in the elaboration of the principles regulating the resort to armed force without considering the question of the lawfulness of unilateral intervention. This is a problem of the greatest practical importance with regard to both the *ius ad bellum* and the *ius in bello*. We are here considering the lawfulness of intervention by individual states in the affairs of other states, rather than collective intervention by the UN. A plethora of General Assembly resolutions may be summarised by the formula: intervention to assist 'rebels' is unlawful unless they are recognised to be fighting for self-determination.¹³ This begs various questions including what is meant by 'rebels'; what constitutes intervention and how to define self-determination. For example, who are the 'rebels' in Kampuchea?; does the supply of weaponry to the Nicaraguan Contras and the Afghan Mujahedin represent intervention by the USA, and can Bangladesh claim that its struggle was for self-determination rather than secession only because it won? This would affect the lawfulness of Indian intervention. It seems that the supply of weapons is seen as qualitatively different from the supply of armed forces. Intervention to assist non-government forces is generally unlawful unless some other factor is present,¹⁴ such as the need to protect nationals in imminent danger from government forces in the state in question, or gross and systematic human rights violations.¹⁵

Assistance to governments is, however, equally problematical when the alleged threat is internal.¹⁶ It may sometimes raise the question of for whose benefit the second state is intervening, particularly perhaps

¹³ For example, GA Res 2131 (XX) and GA Res 2625 (XXV), note 8.

¹⁴ One example of such a factor is the need to protect nationals in another country whose lives are in danger and where the host state is either unwilling or unable to protect them. Whilst the host state is responsible under the customary international law of state responsibility for harm which befalls foreign nationals where the state's agents caused the injury or where the state failed to prevent foreseeable harm inflicted by others, the right to intervene *militarily* to prevent such harm occurring is more controversial. Examples of such action include one of the justifications for the US operation in Grenada, see W Gilmore, *The Grenada Intervention*, London: Mansell, 1984, and Israel's operation at Entebbe airport in Uganda, see Ofer, *Operation Thunder*.

¹⁵ For example, Tanzanian intervention in Uganda, alongside forces loyal to Milton Obote, which precipitated the overthrow of the regime of Idi Amin.

¹⁶ R Higgins, 'International law and civil conflict' in E Luard (ed), *The International Regulation of Civil Wars*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1972, p 169 and the authorities therein cited, particularly the works by R Falk and J Norton Moore at note 2, p 184.

where the intervening state is the former 'mother' country assisting a former colony.¹⁷ Again, there is the problem of determining whether the supply of weapons represents intervention. Where State A has a treaty obligation to supply State B with weapons or military instructors, if it suspends the treaty during an internal conflict it will appear to be assisting the 'rebels'. If it continues to supply the goods or personnel, it will appear to be supporting the government. This problem is universal and applies to both international and internal conflicts. One needs only to consider the supply of French Exocet missiles to Argentina, British weapons to Nigeria, Russian weapons first to the Eritrean 'rebels' and then to the Ethiopian government and US supplies throughout Central America.

Where assistance takes the form of intervention by armed forces, the problems are even more acute, particularly if they are helping to keep a non-elected government in power. Were the Russians doing no more than responding to a request for assistance from a friendly government or did they invade Afghanistan?¹⁸ Vietnamese armed forces undoubtedly invaded Kampuchea but does this mean that any request for assistance by a Kampuchean government is invalid as long as they are there? There is an inevitable factual difficulty about alleged requests for assistance. A state is never going to accede to such a request if it is against its interest to do so, but the more it is in its interest to intervene, the more one may question whether it was in fact asked for assistance by a recognised authority. This not only creates problems with regard to the *ius ad bellum* but it creates a problem of classification of the conflict in the *ius in bello*. As we shall see, there are two discrete bodies of rules, the more comprehensive one applicable in international armed conflicts and only a rudimentary framework applicable in internal conflicts. Where a second state intervenes, lawfully or unlawfully, in a conflict within another state does this 'internationalise' it? In the Afghan

¹⁷ For example, France's assistance to Chad in its conflict with Libya.

¹⁸ Subsequent to the sending of its armed forces around 27 December 1979, Moscow gave 26 December as the date on which it was requested to render assistance. The Soviet broadcasts announced Babrak Karmal's takeover on the evening of 27 December. His only status was that of former ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Any lawful request for assistance could therefore have been made only on 26 December by Hafizullah Amin. By 28 December Amin had been killed by a special KGB 'hit squad' in Afghan army uniforms. Karmal's appointment as Secretary-General of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was announced on Kabul Radio only on the morning of 28 December. No request for assistance before that date could have any legal basis. It should be noted that Karmal's radio broadcast on 27 December claiming to be the new Afghan leader was made on prerecorded tapes and broadcast from Termez in Soviet Central Asia on Kabul Radio's wavelength. See J Fullerton, *The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan*, Hong Kong: Far Eastern Economic Review, 1983, pp 21-3.

conflict, for example, but for the Soviet intervention, only the rules applicable in internal conflicts would have applied. The question then arises of whether the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan rendered the whole of the Geneva Conventions applicable,¹⁹ either in the relations between the Soviet troops and the Afghan 'rebels' and civilian population or in the relations between all the parties. A similar problem also arose in Kampuchea.

It is clear that there are as yet unresolved difficulties in determining the lawfulness of unilateral intervention. The situations thus created, whether or not they are lawful, also create problems in the application of the *ius in bello*. We have already seen that the classification of fighters as 'rebels', as opposed to lawful combatants, is a matter of both political and legal concern and the classification of a conflict as international or non-international has even more wide-ranging implications.

The rules applicable to the conduct of hostilities

The framework adopted in this article is to consider, first, the applicability of rules designed to apply to the conduct of hostilities; second, the distinction between international and non-international conflicts; third, the three fundamental principles of humanitarian law, together with a recent addition from human rights law, and finally the enforcement of humanitarian law.

Difficulties inevitably arise in such a study from the surfeit of allegations and the dearth of hard evidence. Non-governmental organisations in the human rights field have learnt the value of accurate and well-researched reports. There are no organisations known to the author other than the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) whose sole area of concern is humanitarian law.²⁰ The work of some human rights organisations extends into this field, notably in relation to torture and arbitrary killings.²¹ It is, nevertheless, more difficult to investigate

¹⁹ Report of the Independent Counsel on International Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, 17 November 1987, UN Doc A/C.3/42/8, paras 94-5; Reisman and Silk, 'Which law applies to the Afghan conflict?', *American Journal of International Law* 82(3) 1988, p 459.

²⁰ International Alert works in the field of armed conflicts 'to help bring peace to countries at war with themselves, to alleviate human suffering, to protect human rights and promote human development; to alert opinion to danger areas and conflicts'. Its practical activities to date appear to have focused on the prevention of conflict and on dissemination. It does not appear to have carried out investigations into alleged breaches of humanitarian law.

²¹ Amnesty International's 'mandate' includes opposition to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in all cases. The organisation also opposes what it terms 'extra-judicial executions', that is to say, killings performed by regular military and police forces or special units or 'death squads' operating with government complicity. This does not include

breaches of humanitarian law during an armed conflict. It is not surprising that the quantity of such reports is limited and their quality variable.

Applicability of legal rules regulating the conduct of hostilities

The term applicability is used here in two senses, a conventional legal one and a more general one. It is necessary to examine whether states think that hostilities can, in principle, be regulated by law before analysing the situations in which such rules are said to apply. States do not appear to regard war as an end in itself, neither do they usually claim as their object the elimination of their opponents; they usually claim to be fighting for peace! Even in the case of internal guerrilla warfare, the state requires the guerrillas to desist from using armed force but is usually prepared to accept at least some political accommodation. The extermination of the fighters is not the end pursued. If states are fighting to determine the content of the peace they seek, this of necessity sets limits to their prosecution of the war. In particular, they probably wish to avoid having to integrate into their society large numbers of undisciplined, dehumanised trained killers. Armed forces need to be disciplined in war if they are to be responsible citizens in peace. Even during the hostilities, armed forces need to be disciplined if they are to be efficient.²² Military necessity would therefore require rules, almost irrespective of their content. Secondly, states will find peace easier to achieve if they can avoid the bitterness that is the common product of gratuitous atrocities.²³ This factor may help determine the content of the rules.

killings during the course of military operations; 'Our concern is the deliberate killing of people who are away from combat situation . . . We are not trying to police the rules of warfare. The International Red Cross [sic] has a much more direct responsibility in that area.' Interview with Ian Martin, Secretary-General of Amnesty International, *The Manila Chronicle on Sunday* (Manila) 24 July 1988. Asia Watch and Americas Watch also have briefs which overlap with humanitarian law issues; eg *Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides in Nicaragua, 1981-85*, Washington DC: The Americas Watch Committee, 1985.

²² 'Discipline insures stability under stress; it is a prerequisite for predictable performance . . . Self-discipline is a voluntary compliance with directives and regulations of leaders whose requirements are established in the interests of the organization.' US Department of the Army Field Manual (FM) 22-100, *Military Leadership*, 4-2 (1973), cited in W I. Williams, 'The law of war and "personnel infrastructure": A proposed inquiry into maximizing the contributions of non-lawyer officers and of military instruction in support of the law of war,' *Rev de Droit Pénal Militaire et de Droit de la Guerre*, XV(1 2) 1976, p 19 at p 27. See generally, F J Hampson, 'Fighting by the rules: instructing the armed forces in humanitarian law', *International Review of the Red Cross* (1989).

²³ In interviews with Afghan refugees in connection with the Report referred to at note 19, it emerged that the manner in which the DRA and USSR have conducted the hostilities is a real barrier to the establishment of the political cooperation necessary to achieve peace. The Soviet forces were often referred to as 'animals'. See also G I A D Draper, 'The place of laws of war in military instruction' (Lecture), *Royal United Service Institutional Journal*, 111, August 1966, p 189 at p 194.

States, therefore, understand the *need* to regulate the conduct of hostilities. They also appear to think armed conflicts *capable* of being regulated in such a way. The relationship between need and ability may be no more than wishful thinking but states have testified to their willingness to accept legal rules in this field by their ratification of treaty texts. No fewer than 165 states have ratified the Geneva Conventions.²⁴ This not only makes them of near-universal applicability as treaty law but is strong evidence for the establishment of the principles as part of customary international law.²⁵ Whether the Conventions are a noble and lofty ideal for the protection of humanity is irrelevant. The simple fact is that states have agreed to be bound by them.

The Conventions were drafted in 1949 and inspired by the lessons learnt in World War II. They concern principally the protection of persons of no military significance, such as the sick and wounded, those *hors de combat*, prisoners of war and occupied civilians. They do not deal with the protection of civilians living in their own country, or with the means and methods of warfare. The latter were regulated by the Hague Conventions of 1907.²⁶ Limited areas of 'the Hague Law' were updated as, for example, by the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of gas in warfare.²⁷ Essentially, however, 'the Hague Law' remained as it was in 1907 until 1977.

In the years following 1949, particularly during struggles for the independence of colonies in the 1960s and 1970s, it became clear that both bodies of rules needed to be updated and related to one another. The principal casualties of war were civilians. They could not simply become an additional protected group under the Geneva Conventions. If they were to be afforded any effective protection, it could be only by the setting of new limits to the ways in which hostilities were conducted. In other words, their protection required 'the Hague Law' on the means and methods of warfare to be updated and incorporated into the regime of Geneva law. The negotiations were long and arduous but they abutted in the conclusion of two Protocols to the Geneva Conventions in

²⁴ *Dissemination*, No 9, August 1988, loose sheet. For the text of the Conventions and others referred to subsequently, see A Roberts and R Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.

²⁵ T Meron, 'The Geneva Conventions as customary law', *AJIL* 81(2), 1987, p 348. See also, 'A workshop on customary international law and the 1977 Protocols, proceedings of the sixth annual American Red Cross - Washington College of Law Conference on International Humanitarian Law, *American University Journal of International Law and Policy*, 2(2) 1987.

²⁶ See particularly, Annex to Hague Convention IV, Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, Roberts and Guelff, *Documents*.

²⁷ 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, *ibid*.

1977.²⁸ Protocols are normal treaties in their own right but they are additional to some previous treaty obligation. This has the advantage, rather like a postscript to a letter, of preserving the original text intact. Previously agreed questions are not reopened.

The Protocols represent at least the partial merger of the two streams of law regulating armed conflicts; the 'Law of the Hague' which dealt with the conduct of hostilities and the relationship between the combatants *inter se* and the 'Law of Geneva', which dealt with the protection of everyone else except civilians in their own countries. The Protocols updated the two bodies of rules to take account of technological developments and new types of warfare. As we shall see, the status of guerrilla fighters and the lack of defined battle areas in much contemporary warfare represent but two such developments and cause very real legal difficulties in attempting to regulate the conduct of hostilities. The Protocols also sought, for the first time, to give some measure of protection to the civilian population inadvertently caught up in warfare. Protocol I deals with international, and Protocol II with non-international, armed conflicts. In the eleven years since their adoption, only seventy-three states have ratified or acceded to Protocol I and sixty-six to Protocol II.²⁹ Those states are bound by the Protocols as a matter of treaty law. In addition, all states are bound by such of their provisions as represent customary international law.

States, then, acknowledge the need for rules in war and seem to think hostilities are capable of such regulation. They have demonstrated this by ratifying international treaties that provide for such regulation. They are bound by those treaties as a matter of legal obligation and independently of their perceived military and political usefulness.

The second question regarding applicability is a legal one. In what situations do the Conventions and Protocols apply and is that contingent upon the lawfulness of resorting to armed force? Perhaps the greatest achievement of humanitarian law has been the splitting of the *ius ad bellum* and the *ius in bello*. At first sight, it seems reasonable and just that the victim of aggression should have the benefit of rules protecting, for example, prisoners of war but that the aggressor should not. The objections to such a policy are, however, self-evident. It assumes a captured soldier is responsible for the action of his state in resorting to

²⁸ 1977 Geneva Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, and 1977 Geneva Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, *ibid*.

²⁹ *Dissemination*, No 9, 1988, loose sheet; H-P Gasser, 'Steps taken to encourage states to accept 1977 Protocols', *JRRC*, 27th Year, 258 (May/June) 1987, p 259.

armed force, however properly he has conducted himself during the fighting.³⁰ At a practical level, if one party is denied the benefit of the rules, it is not itself likely to respect them. The rules of the *ius in bello* therefore apply irrespective of the lawfulness of the resort to armed force. They apply by virtue of the facts, the existence of an armed conflict. Under Article 2, common to all four of the Geneva Conventions, they '... apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them'. Furthermore, they apply '... to all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory of a High Contracting Party ...'. The Conventions therefore apply in their entirety to all armed conflicts between two states, even if the fighting occurs in the territory of only one of them. They, therefore, applied not only in the Iran-Iraq conflict but also in that between the United Kingdom and Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas, even though the state of war was not officially recognised. Similarly, they applied in the relations between India and Pakistan during Bangladesh's struggle for independence. Israel disputes the applicability of the Conventions to its occupation of the West Bank territories and Gaza Strip on the grounds that that would require it to recognise the title to the territories of Jordan and Egypt respectively.³¹ The ICRC maintains that the Conventions are applicable by virtue of the fact of occupation of the territories; no recognition of title is implied.³² The

³⁰ A member of the armed forces not only may but must be tried for grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions perpetrated by him. This is without prejudice to the responsibility of his superior officers for ordering him to commit the act. He is not, however, criminally liable for taking part in the conflict as a member of the armed forces of the state. The position in that regard is different for persons not recognised as combatants, such as members of terrorist groups or insurgent bands. It is generally seen as appropriate to charge only those in positions of political power and authority with offences against the *ius ad bellum* such as the waging of aggressive war, see, for example, the *Judgment of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal*. This view is questioned by some socialist states who have entered reservations to the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions. For a practical illustration of the problem, see the attempt by North Vietnam to deny POW status to all captured US military personnel on the grounds that they were all war criminals, presumably on account of their participation in an 'unlawful' armed conflict. Aldrich, 'Establishing Legal Norms through Multilateral Negotiation—The Laws of War', *Case WJ Int'l L* 9 (1977) p 9 at pp 12–13; 10 M Whiteman, *Digest of International Law* (1968) pp 229–34.

³¹ M Shamgar, 'Legal concepts and problems of the Israeli military government—the initial stage' in M Shamgar (ed), *Military Government in the Territories Administered by Israel 1967–1980: the legal aspects*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University Jerusalem, Faculty of Law, 1982, p 13. It should be emphasised that, notwithstanding its view on the formal inapplicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel has claimed to apply de facto its humanitarian provisions, *ibid* p 42.

³² 'The Middle East Activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross', *IRRC*, 10th Year, 113 (Aug) 1970, p 424 at p 426; see also, E R Cohen, *Human Rights in the Israeli-Occupied Territories, 1967–1982*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, pp 51–6.

Conventions therefore apply in their entirety to conflicts between two or more states, to conflicts within the territory of one state but between two or more states parties, and to occupied territory. The last two might at first sight appear to be internal conflicts but they are not treated in that way.

Another category of conflict, one that bears all the hallmarks of an internal struggle, was added to the list by virtue of Article 1.4 of Protocol I. This controversial provision provides that the Conventions and Protocol I apply in their entirety to '... armed conflicts in which peoples are fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist regimes in the exercise of their right to self-determination...' Such conflicts are not between two states; they are between a state and a putative state, at least in the case of the first two categories. This provision has been claimed to be a retrogressive step back to the 'just war' tradition and to represent a dangerous incursion of the *ius ad bellum* into the *ius in bello*.³³ The provision is, in fact, of very limited application, given the restrictive view taken by the UN as to who can exercise a right to self-determination. It was drafted with specific conflicts in mind; the then Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola (colonial domination), the Israeli occupied territories (alien occupation) and South Africa's control of Namibia (racist regime). There is no reason in principle why other occupations should not qualify but, as already seen, there may be political difficulties in labelling a situation as such. The Soviet Union, for example, would dispute that it was 'in occupation' of Afghanistan. It may be wiser to restrict the conflicts covered by Article 1.4 of Protocol I to those that were clearly being addressed at the time.

The Conventions as a whole apply only to conflicts between two or more states or ones that are regarded as international for one of the reasons given above. In the case of civil wars or conflicts confined to one state, only Article 3 common to all four Conventions applies. *Prima facie*, in Chile, El Salvador, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Fiji only Article 3 applies because they are '... armed conflict(s) not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties...' As already seen, foreign intervention, either in the form of the supply of weapons or of armed forces, may be a complicating factor.

³³ D E Graham, 'The 1974 diplomatic conference on the law of war: a victory for political causes and a return to the 'Just War' concept of the eleventh century', *Washington and Lee Law Rev.*, 32, 1975, p 25.

At first glance, Article 3 applies to all situations not covered by Article 2; conflicts must be either international or not international. Protocol II, which is designed to supplement Article 3, adds a new element. It claims not to modify its (Article 3's) 'existing conditions of application' but it claims to apply to internal conflicts between the armed forces of the state and '... dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this Protocol'. Furthermore, it discounts 'situations of internal disturbances and tensions, such as riots, isolated and sporadic acts of violence and other acts of a similar nature, *as not being* armed conflicts' (emphasis added).³⁴ Protocol II has therefore added organisational requirements, territorial control and a minimum threshold of disruption to the criteria of applicability of common Article 3. It is not clear whether the dissident forces merely have to be *able* to implement the Protocol or whether this must be evidenced by their actually doing so. These new criteria must either be regarded as implicit in Article 3, in which case some conflicts do not come within the scope of the Geneva Conventions at all, or else should be confined to Protocol II. In that case, some non-international conflicts will be regulated by both Article 3 and Protocol II, whereas others will only be governed by common Article 3.³⁵ The latter interpretation would probably afford better protection to the victims of armed conflicts.³⁶

Before leaving the question of the applicability of the Conventions, it

³⁴ The UK, for example, has always maintained that the conflict in Northern Ireland has never attained the proportions of an 'armed conflict' for the purposes of the applicability of Protocol II. An example of the difficulties encountered in securing the application of treaties ratified by states is seen in the statement of the Afghan representative to the Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: 'With reference to the application of the Geneva Conventions, in particular Article 3 and of Additional Protocol II, the representative stated that there was no civil war in Afghanistan and that the Revolutionary Government controlled the entire country. Terrorists and bandits armed by foreign powers who launched raids from outside the country were alone responsible for all acts of aggression perpetrated against the Afghan people.' 1985 *Report of the Human Rights Committee, General Assembly, Official Records, 40th Session Supplement No 40 (A/40/40)*, p 122 para 615.

³⁵ The USA is proposing to apply a compromise solution in which Protocol II will not apply to isolated and sporadic acts of violence but will apply even if the dissident forces '... occupy no significant territory but conduct sporadic guerrilla operations over a wide area'. Letter of submission from Secretary of State George Shultz to President Reagan in *State Department Report, S Treaty Doc No 2, 100th Cong, 1st Sess (1987)*, cited in Capt D Smith 'New protections for victims of international armed conflicts: the proposed ratification of Protocol II by the United States', *Military Law Review* 120 (Spring) 1988, p 59 at p 68.

³⁶ *Commentary on the Additional Protocols*, ICRC, Geneva, 1987, p 1350. (Whilst the Commentary was written by members of the ICRC, it is not strictly speaking the Commentary of the ICRC.)

is necessary to consider briefly the basis for it. Do they apply on the basis of reciprocity or as a unilateral treaty obligation? If their application depends on reciprocity, the breach of the Conventions by one party would entitle the other party to suspend the operation of the treaty. The 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol, for example, is not in terms based on reciprocity but so many states have entered a reservation to that effect that it may be better viewed as a 'no first use' agreement. The prohibition of belligerent reprisals against protected groups in the Geneva Conventions strongly suggests that they are not based on reciprocity. The UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan has also asserted that common Article 3 is not based on reciprocity.³⁷ As seen above, there may be an argument that Protocol II is applicable only where the dissident armed forces have evinced some intention of applying it. Subject to that reservation, the breach of the Conventions by one party does not seem to entitle the opposing forces to suspend their operation in either international or non-international conflicts.

The distinction between international and non-international conflicts

As seen above, there is a fundamental difference between international and internal conflicts. The whole of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I, if ratified or if considered customary international law, apply to the former. The latter, on the other hand, are subject only to the rudimentary framework of common Article 3 and, in some cases, to Protocol II, subject again to ratification. In this context, it is necessary only to examine why the result of the classification is so important and to consider some of the conflicts in which it has posed a problem.

The Geneva Conventions and Protocol I define who is entitled to combatant status. A fighter qualifying for that status is not only entitled to the status of a prisoner of war upon capture but he cannot be prosecuted merely for the fact of having fought. Without that status he may be treated as no more than a criminal who has treasonably taken up arms. The same texts regulate in great detail the protection to be afforded to medical equipment and personnel as well as the sick and injured themselves.³⁸ The treatment to which prisoners of war are entitled is set out in the third Convention. Protocol I establishes the

³⁷ *Report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights in accordance with Commission resolution 1986/40 and Economic and Social Council decision 1986/136 (A/41/778), Annex, para 20.

³⁸ The first Geneva Convention deals with the wounded and sick on land and the second with the wounded, sick and shipwrecked at sea. Protocol I updates these provisions and also regulates the use of medical aircraft in Articles 8-31.

balance which must be achieved between attacking military targets and protecting the civilian population.³⁹ All these rules impose both positive and negative obligations on the parties. There are certain actions which they must take and some they must refrain from taking.

Common Article 3 and Protocol II are more negative in character. The former deals essentially with civilians and those *hors de combat*. In other words, there are virtually no limits on the treatment of combatants in internal conflicts. Those are precisely the situations in which fighters are most likely to be regarded as common criminals who have unlawfully taken up arms against their government. Protocol II tries to impose positive curbs on the conduct of hostilities and the treatment of captured fighters. It will be recalled, however, that it has attracted only a limited number of ratifications.

In view of the range of protection offered by the two legal regimes, it is vital to those engaged in a conflict, and even more to its innocent victims, to know how the conflict is to be classified. In many situations, the classification of a conflict as international or non-international does not pose any great difficulty. The problem arises most acutely where the armed forces of State A are engaged in a conflict in State B, in support of the government forces. If they support the 'rebels', the conflict would probably be seen as between States A and B, as in the case of India's assistance to the nascent Bangladesh, and therefore within common Article 2. Where the foreign forces are assisting the government, however, the conflict can hardly be said to be 'between' States A and B. This situation has arisen with regard to the Cuban involvement in Angola, that of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and that of Vietnam in Kampuchea. These would be internal conflicts but for the foreign involvement. There are three relationships to consider. If it would appear strange to treat the relationship between Afghan government forces and the mujahedin as governed by the rules applicable in international conflicts, it would appear no less strange to treat that between the Soviet forces and the mujahedin and civilian population as regulated by the rules applicable in internal conflicts. Joint operations might be difficult to manage if the Soviet forces had to apply the Geneva Conventions in their entirety but the Afghan government forces only had to apply common Article 3.

One cannot turn to the ICRC's practice as guidance in these cases because, for humanitarian reasons, they have had to adopt a pragmatic solution. Since the parties cannot dispute the applicability of common

³⁹ Protocol I, Articles 48-60.

Article 3 as a minimum, the ICRC invokes that provision, without prejudice to the question of whether the Conventions should in fact be applied in their entirety.⁴⁰ The ICRC has a big enough problem in seeking compliance with that minimum level of protection. It must therefore fall to the international community to establish which legal regime should apply to the different relationships. This problem is both pressing and of considerable practical importance.

Fundamental principles of humanitarian law⁴¹

The provisions of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols represent the application in detail of three fundamental principles. The first applies to combatants *inter se* and provides that '[t]he right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited.'⁴² The second concerns the conduct of hostilities and is encapsulated in the notion of proportionality. An example would be Article 57.2(b) of Protocol I which provides that 'an attack shall be cancelled or suspended if it becomes apparent that . . . the attack may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated'. The third principle is known variously as the principle of distinction or of non-combatant immunity. An example is to be found in what Article 48 of Protocol I calls the Basic Rule; 'In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives.'

This enumeration of the three principles is not controversial. It is also arguable that a fourth principle is emerging which is not sup-

⁴⁰ H-P Gasser, 'Internationalized non-international armed conflicts: case studies of Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Lebanon', *American University Law Review* 33(1), 1983, p 145. On the situation in Afghanistan, see also note 19.

⁴¹ For a history of the development of humanitarian law, see Best, *Humanity in Warfare*; for an introductory philosophical analysis of the fundamental principles, see Clark, *Waging War*, chapter 4; for an up-to-date legal analysis, see de Lupis, *The Law of War*, Part II: the reader should note that some of the arguments and analysis are controversial.

⁴² Article 22 of the Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907, Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. It should also be noted that the provisions of treaty law, both the Hague and Geneva Conventions, are supplemented by a principle expressed in the Preamble to Hague Convention IV and known as the Martens Clause to the effect that '... in cases not included in the Regulations . . . the inhabitants and the belligerents remain under the protection and the rule of the principles of the law of nations, as they result from the usages established among civilized peoples, from the laws of humanity and the dictates of the public conscience'.

plementary to the earlier ones but, rather, reinforces them. This fourth principle comes from a different field of law, one in which no distinction need be made between fighters and civilians. Under international human rights law, no one may ever, even in war, be subjected to torture or arbitrary killing.⁴³ These principles will be examined in turn.

1 Restrictions on the means of injuring the enemy

Combatants have a right to kill the combatants of the opposing forces but, under this principle, they are prohibited from causing '... superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering'.⁴⁴ Once the enemy has laid down his arms, the right to kill him ends and the obligation to care for him as a prisoner of war begins.⁴⁵ These principles would prohibit the use of unlawful weapons, such as dum-dum bullets and gas, even on the battlefield, and would prohibit the unlawful use of lawful weapons, such as the laying of unmarked minefields or the use of bayonets to disembowel.⁴⁶ These are confirmed by the prohibition of torture and arbitrary killing under human rights law. Nor may armed forces resort to perfidy,⁴⁷ not least on account of the likely consequences for the subsequent compliance with the law by the other party. The rationale behind the prohibition of perfidy is explained in Article 37 of Protocol I: '[a]cts inviting the confidence of an adversary to lead him to believe that he is entitled to, or is obliged to accord, protection under the rules

⁴³ The human rights treaty texts provide an elaboration of rights and in many cases include a clause permitting derogation in time of public emergency or armed conflict. They also provide that there are some rights from which no derogation is ever possible, notably the prohibition of torture and the arbitrary deprivation of life. As a matter of treaty law, certain human rights therefore remain applicable, even during an armed conflict. See further note 66 below and accompanying text.

⁴⁴ Protocol I, Article 35(2); see also Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907, Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, Article 23.

⁴⁵ Third Geneva Convention 1949, Article 5; see also Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907, Articles 3 and 4. It should be noted that POWs are 'in the power of the hostile Government, but not of the individuals or corps who capture them,' *ibid*. This makes the state itself responsible for the treatment afforded to POWs. Difficulties arose where, owing to the combat situation, captured combatants could not be evacuated and treated in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention. This is now regulated by Protocol I, Article 41(3).

⁴⁶ The use of gas and other prohibited chemical agents has been alleged in the conflicts in Vietnam and Afghanistan. There is considerable evidence of the use of poison gas by the Iraqi armed forces both within and outside the territory of the state. There have been allegations that the Argentine minefields in the Falklands/Malvinas were inadequately marked and recorded; see M Hastings and S Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, London: Pan Books, 1983, p 355. In Afghanistan there is evidence of the random dispersal from the air of small 'butterfly mines' as well as inadequately marked minefields around military posts; see Report of Independent Counsel on Afghanistan, paras 52 and 54. In the Annex to the *Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan*, he refers at para 25 to an incident in which a woman (ie a civilian) was allegedly disembowelled with a bayonet.

⁴⁷ For example, Protocol I, Article 37; see also generally, Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907.

of international law applicable in armed conflict, with intent to betray that confidence, shall constitute perfidy'. One example would be the use of the white flag of surrender as a trick.⁴⁸

In considering the practice in Third World conflicts, regard must be had for the words of warning at the start of this section. Further, it should be remembered that in many internal conflicts the armed forces do not treat forces they regard as 'guerrillas' in the way in which they would fight a recognised army. The Argentine armed forces may have had an appalling record of ill-treatment in the 'dirty war' in Argentina but, in the Falklands/Malvinas conflict, they did on the whole conduct themselves with propriety.⁴⁹ The problems tended to arise in the area of their treatment of the civilian population.⁵⁰ The question of the recognition of combatant status will be dealt with at (3) below. The non-recognition of such a status, combined with the frequent defiance of the rules by the non-government forces themselves, may well be the largest factor contributing to breaches of the rules regulating the treatment of combatants. In the case of Afghanistan, for example, there is evidence of the unlawful use of mines, the use of unlawful weapons, executions in the field and the subjection to torture of suspected combatants. One may also ponder the fate of Soviet soldiers captured by the mujahedin. Some are taken prisoner but there is some evidence that others are killed.⁵¹ In the Iran-Iraq conflict, where there was no problem as to combatant status, the ICRC has experienced difficulty in obtaining regular access to prisoners of war.⁵² The breach of humanitarian law for which that conflict will long be remembered is the

⁴⁸ It is important that armed forces should distinguish between the perfidious abuse of the white flag and a genuine mistake in the confusion of battle; see, for example, the killing of Lieutenant Barry over a white flag at Goose Green, East Falkland; Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, pp 283 and 363.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp 354 and 363. The authors suggest (p 64) that the recovery of the islands was seen by the Argentine authorities as a way of cleansing the reputation of the armed forces. They cite the choice of Captain Alfredo Astiz to recapture South Georgia. He later proved to be an embarrassing prisoner of war for the British (p 154) as France and Sweden wished to question him in connection with the 'disappearance' and alleged torture of their citizens whilst in custody in Argentina some years previously. Under the Third Geneva Convention, the British could not permit such questioning.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p 288 and 353.

⁵¹ Report of the Independent Counsel on Afghanistan, paras 52 and 54 (mines); paras 55-9 (unlawful weapons); para 49 (executions in the field); paras 22-31 (torture). On the code of conduct within the Soviet armed forces, see Fullerton, *Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan*, p 94; on the treatment of captured Russian soldiers, *ibid.* pp 94-5. On attempts by the ICRC to disseminate knowledge of the principles of humanitarian law to the mujahedin, see note 63 below.

⁵² See monthly 'Bulletin' produced by the ICRC; the same problem has arisen in the conflict between Chad and Libya, 'Bulletin', ICRC, Geneva, No 141, October 1987, p 1; *IRRC*, 27th Year, 261, (Nov-Dec), 1987, p 643.

well-attested use of poison gas by the Iraqi armed forces.⁵³ This is seen as a particularly serious breach for reasons that will be examined below.

The evidence of deteriorating respect for humanitarian law in the 1980s includes only one exception. The strange war in the South Atlantic was fought with an unusual regard for the rules. More than that, the parties positively cooperated with the ICRC and with one another in certain areas. The law concerning war at sea had not been updated since 1949.⁵⁴ At the time of the negotiations leading to the conclusion of the Protocols, there was virtually no experience of the Second Geneva Convention in operation. Technological developments had outpaced the law and gaps were revealed. How, for example, were hospital ships to be protected from heat-seeking missiles, released before the pilot could have any idea of the status of the ship attacked? The parties cooperated by establishing recognised 'boxes' which were to be immune from attack and which would contain only hospital ships or vessels carrying the injured to such ships.⁵⁵ This represents more than mere respect for law. It indicates a willingness to create new rules and the trust necessary to implement them. Cynicism may suggest that both parties needed to win the battle of international public opinion and that this dictated cooperation with the ICRC and compliance with the rules. The rejoinder is to ask why international public opinion cannot more often be mobilised in this way and made into a factor that the parties cannot ignore. It would seem likely that the closely defined battlefield and the relatively insignificant number of civilians must have made compliance with the rules easier in the Falklands/Malvinas conflict. The fact that national survival was not at stake for either party may also have contributed to the respect shown for the law. Nevertheless, the parties were fighting 'for real'. They were having to put into practice rules of which they had little practical experience, particularly in the case of the largely conscript Argentine land forces. There were mistakes and there were certain breaches of the rules. The Falkland/Malvinas conflict nevertheless does show that substantial compliance with humanitarian law is possible where there is the political and military will.

⁵³ See ICRC press release No 1567, 23 March 1988. The Iraqi foreign minister has admitted the use of chemical weapons, *The Independent* (London) 2 July 1988.

⁵⁴ The Second Geneva Convention of 1949 deals with the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at sea.

⁵⁵ S Junod, *La protection des victimes du conflit armé îles Falkland-Malvinas* (1982); *Droit international humanitaire et action humanitaire*, Geneva: ICRC, 1984; M Arthur, *Above All, Courage first-hand accounts from the Falklands front line*, London: Sphere Books, 1986, p 178.

2 *The principle of proportionality*⁵⁶

Like the principle discussed above, proportionality acts as a restraining factor in the conduct of hostilities. It is usually invoked on account of the presence of civilians. It should be recognised that adherence to this principle may involve sustaining higher military casualties in order to protect civilians. So, for example, if armed forces are trying to attack forces entrenched on a hillside near a village, the commander has two military alternatives. He may use aerial bombardment to attack the enemy positions and then send in ground forces for a 'mopping up' operation. Military casualties might be slight but there would be a grave risk of high civilian casualties. The alternative is a ground-based operation, outflanking the enemy and then attacking his positions. The risk of military casualties is much higher but the risk to the civilian population much less. To comply with international law, the commander would be obliged to adopt the second alternative. The evidence suggests that this principle is more honoured in the breach than the observance.⁵⁷ Commonly, the armed forces assume that the civilian population is giving support to the opposing forces, particularly in internal conflicts. Indeed, certain urban guerrilla groups work from within the civilian population in the hope of being able to disappear within it after a military operation. If both parties wish to respect humanitarian law, they need to base their operations outside centres of population to make the protection of civilians possible. Newspaper accounts of military operations tend not to be very specific regarding matters of concern to humanitarian lawyers! Detailed evidence from the Afghan conflict and the use of tear gas in allegedly unsuitable environments by the Israeli defence forces are but two examples which reinforce the general impres-

⁵⁶ In addition to being a fundamental principle of humanitarian law, proportionality is one of the ingredients of the customary international law of self-defence, part of the *ius ad bellum*. Whilst the question of a breach of the *ius ad bellum* is irrelevant to the applicability of the *ius in bello*, the former remains applicable during a conflict, before the organs of the UN at least. So, for example, the sinking of the *General Belgrano* in the Falklands/Malvinas conflict was justified solely in terms of self-defence before the Security Council. This meant, amongst other things, that the action had to be proportionate. See C Greenwood, 'The relationship between *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*', *Review of International Studies*, 9(4), 1983, p 221 at pp 223-4.

✓ Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: a moral argument with historical illustrations*, London: Penguin, 1980, pp 154-6; the commander's obligation is defined in Protocol I, Article 57. On the systematic breach of the principle in the conflict in Vietnam, see Walzer, *ibid*, pp 186-196; 322; in Afghanistan, see Report of the Independent Counsel on Afghanistan, paras 33-6; 45; 52-4; in the Iran-Iraq conflict, see ICRC press release No 1563, 10 March 1988 on the indiscriminate bombing of civilians. On the alleged use by Iraq of both poison gas and chemical weapons against both Kurdish guerrillas and civilians, see *The Times* (London) 3 September 1988.

sion that no very great attempt is made to spare the civilian population.⁵⁸

The principle of proportionality also applies to the conduct of operations in an exclusively military environment. However justified it might have been on the part of the United Kingdom to bomb the bases in Argentina from which aircraft equipped with Exocet missiles were taking off in order to reduce potential military casualties, this would have been seen as an escalation of the conflict and as a disproportionate action. The lawfulness of the sinking of the *Belgrano* was discussed by the Security Council in precisely these terms.⁵⁹

3 *The principle of distinction*

The principle of distinction, or non-combatant immunity, would require military operations to be confined to combatants and military targets. Conversely, it would require immunity from attack for civilians, civilian objects and things indispensable to their survival,⁶⁰ such as crops. This implies that one can distinguish between military and civilian targets. In several contexts mention has already been made of the often irregular nature of modern warfare. Guerrilla warfare describes not only a type of fighter but also a particular type of warfare. The battle zones may not be clearly established. Even if the fighters try to carry out operations away from towns and villages, they may return there at night. They are dependent on assistance from the civilian population, whether that comes from fear or from genuine support. How, then, does the law identify those who count as legitimate fighters? On the answer to this question hang many issues of great practical importance. Combatants may be killed but they cannot be punished for the mere fact of fighting. Irregular fighters, on the other hand, may be tried and condemned as common criminals. Where they have been killing soldiers, the charge will be murder and, in some cases, treason. These are capital offences in many jurisdictions. Or again, those who are not combatants are deemed to be civilians and may not be made the object of attack. Under Protocol I certain positive measures must be taken to protect them.

Article I of the Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907 established that not only armies but also militia and volunteer corps were subject to the rights and duties of war on condition that they satisfied four

⁵⁸ Amnesty International News Release, MDE 15/29/88, calling for urgent investigation of security forces' 'deliberate misuse' of tear gas, June 1988; see more generally, 'Bulletin', ICRC, Geneva, No 145, February 1988.

⁵⁹ Greenwood, 'The relationship between *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*', p 224.

⁶⁰ Protocol I, Articles 48-51; Protocol II, Articles 13 and 17 (civilians); Protocol I, Articles 48, 52-6; Protocol II, Articles 14-16 (objects indispensable to survival).

requirements. They had to '... be commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates; ... to have a fixed distinctive emblem recognizable at a distance; ... to carry arms openly, and ... to conduct their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war'. These requirements posed difficulties for the French resistance and the Yugoslav partisans, amongst others, in the Second World War. The conflicts since then have very commonly involved highly irregular forces. To deny such groups combatant status automatically not only prejudiced the chances of persuading those groups to comply with the rules of humanitarian law but it placed the entire civilian population at greater risk. On the other hand, to accord combatant status to anyone who fights means that the armed forces will not be able to recognise the enemy. They may then be led to assume that everyone, including women and children, is their enemy and therefore a legitimate target of attack.⁶¹ Protocol I addressed this question by repeating the first of the Hague Convention requirements but not the second and third. The fourth is retained by implication. The Parties recognised '... that there are situations in armed conflicts where, owing to the nature of the hostilities an armed combatant cannot ... distinguish himself ...' from the civilian population but '... he shall retain his status as a combatant, provided that, in such situations, he carries his arms openly: (a) during each military engagement, and (b) during such time as he is visible to the adversary while he is engaged in a military deployment preceding the launching of an attack in which he is to participate'.

Disquiet as to definition of a combatant is one of the important factors inhibiting ratification of Protocol I. It will be recalled that, in internal conflicts, for Protocol II to be applicable the dissident forces must be under responsible command and must '... exercise such control over a part of [the state's] territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this Protocol'.⁶² The ball is now in the court of unorthodox armed forces; they need to prove their own willingness to comply with the requirements of humanitarian law. With the exception of Ethiopia, where pitched battles

⁶¹ Protocol I includes special measures of protection for women (Article 76) and children (Article 77). Under the latter, parties to a conflict are to take '... all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take part in hostilities ...' The involvement of children as defined in the Iran-Iraq conflict is notorious. The Independent Counsel on Afghanistan received evidence of the alleged creation of an 'age correction commission' whose function appears to be to alter the record of the dates of birth of young people so as to make them eligible for conscription, the age of which has been lowered to fifteen years. See generally, 'Bulletin', ICRC, Geneva, No 140, September 1987, pp 2-3.

⁶² Protocol II, Article 1(1).

appear to be fought with the opposing forces, and the inter-state conflicts between Iran and Iraq, the United Kingdom and Argentina, and Chad and Libya, the status to be accorded the fighters seems to be a problem in nearly every Third World conflict. In many of those to which Protocol II applies or only common Article 3, the dissident armed forces themselves do not appear to conform to the requirements of humanitarian law.⁶³

This is only one side of the picture. The principle of distinction requires the *protection* of civilians from direct attack. In very many cases we hear of attacks on what are indisputably civilian targets. This is all the more striking when one considers that such attacks do not further any military interest. The principle involves a negative obligation, not attacking such targets, rather than positive measures of protection. Yet, massacres of civilians are reported from nearly every conflict, even those involving highly educated and trained armed forces. This raises questions as to the enforcement of humanitarian law which will be dealt with below. We are not dealing here with civilian casualties incidental to a military attack nor with disproportionate, and therefore unlawful, aerial bombardment as a result of which there are civilian casualties. We are dealing with the intentional killing of persons known to be civilians.

In the conflict in Afghanistan, for example, children are reported to have been killed before their grandparents' eyes because the latter could not produce money. Women and old people are reported to have been rounded up and burnt alive. The UN Special Rapporteur was an eyewitness to an aerial attack on a refugee column.⁶⁴ These atrocities serve no conceivable military purpose. If the object is to terrorise the population into surrendering, experience in the Second World War, as in the bombing of Rotterdam, suggests that this method of fighting is ineffective. Indeed, it may harden the people's will to resist and make the establishment of peace more difficult. Massacres may therefore be

⁶³ This is in part due to practical difficulties in providing medical assistance and prisoner of war camps within the territory in which the dissident armed forces are fighting. It is also due to ignorance. The ICRC attempts to disseminate the principles of humanitarian law amongst such forces through, for example, first aid courses; *Dissemination*, ICRC, No 7, August 1987, pp 7-8. It is often difficult to persuade the non-state forces of the value of adhering to the principles of humanitarian law, particularly if the armed forces of the state are not doing so; Fullerton, *Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan*, p 95.

⁶⁴ Testimony of the director of a relief agency based in Peshawar, Pakistan, to the Independent Counsel regarding an incident in Kunduz province, Afghanistan, in the summer of 1984 in which twelve children allegedly had their throats cut, one after the other, by Soviet soldiers. The Independent Counsel on Afghanistan received several independent accounts of civilians being rounded up and in some cases being shot by machine gun and, in others, burned alive. On the attack on the refugee column, see Report of the Independent Counsel on Afghanistan, para 66.

actually counter-productive in military terms. In internal conflicts, the armed forces and paramilitary forces of several Latin American states are notorious for the infliction of torture, the arbitrary killing of civilians and effecting 'disappearances', all of which practices are in breach of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and human rights law. In short, the one area of humanitarian law which ought to be most readily capable of being respected is, in practice, the source of the most flagrant breaches of that law.

4 Human rights law applicable in armed conflicts⁶⁵

International treaties dealing with human rights list certain rights from which no derogation is possible even during time of war.⁶⁶ That is to say that states accept the obligation never to engage in torture or arbitrary killings.⁶⁷ The benefit of those rights does not depend on combatant or civilian status, but exists by virtue of a person's status as a human being. The two particular rights enumerated are, in substance, also protected under both the generality of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I and also under common Article 3 in non-international conflicts. Their interest here lies in the fact that international human rights law does provide an enforcement mechanism.⁶⁸ The form and effectiveness of the machinery varies under the different instruments. It is worth noting that states are responsible for the conduct of their armed

⁶⁵ Some commentators dispute the appropriateness of human rights law in the context of an armed conflict; eg K D Suter, 'An enquiry into the meaning of the phrase "Human Rights in Armed Conflicts"', *Rev de Droit Pénal Militaire et de Droit de la Guerre*, XV (3-4), 1976, p 393. The human rights texts themselves make it quite clear that certain provisions do apply in all situations, including armed conflicts. See also H Meyrowitz, 'Le Droit de la guerre et les droits de l'homme', *Rev du Droit Public et de la Science Politique en France et à l'Étranger*, 5, 1972, p 1059.

⁶⁶ The following provisions stipulate those rights from which no derogation is possible: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 4; European Convention on Human Rights, Article 15; American Convention on Human Rights, Article 27. For texts see I Brownlie, *Basic Documents on Human Rights*, 2nd ed, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981 and P Sieghart, *The International Law of Human Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

⁶⁷ Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, no derogation is possible with regard to the protection of the right to life, the prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, slavery, imprisonment for failure to fulfil a contractual obligation and retroactive penal legislation and the protection of the right to recognition as a person before the law and of freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Furthermore there are considerable limits placed on derogation which involves discrimination. Even where the substantive and procedural requirements for derogation are satisfied with regard to rights from which derogation is possible, the measures taken must not be inconsistent with the state's other obligations under international law, such as the Hague and Geneva Conventions.

⁶⁸ For that under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, see Sieghart, *The International Law of Human Rights*, pp 381-90; under the American Convention on Human Rights, *ibid*, pp 403-14.

forces, even acting extra-territorially.⁶⁹ It may be possible to use the human rights enforcement machinery to seek the condemnation of acts which violate both human rights law and humanitarian law.⁷⁰

The combined effect of the two bodies of rules is that some things can never be done to anyone but, thereafter, the limits of what can be done to them in an armed conflict depends on whether they are recognised as combatants or civilians.

The enforcement of humanitarian law

States have accepted the legal obligations described in this article by ratifying treaties. It might be thought that such acceptance would itself lead to compliance. It is clear, however, that that is not the case. The treaties themselves provide for enforcement by dissemination and the seeking out and trying of those alleged to have committed grave breaches.⁷¹ Whilst superior orders are not a defence, it appears that they may be pleaded in mitigation.⁷² Enforcement through national military law is a matter of political will. Even in those unusual instances in which that will is present, difficulties may arise. The Argentine (civilian) government has had to make major compromises in its attempt to bring torturers and human rights violators to justice.⁷³ Even where prosecutions take place, the sentences handed down may be short and

⁶⁹ For example, under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, *Burgos v Uruguay* (R.12/52) HRC 36, 176; *de Casariego v Uruguay* (R.13/56) HRC 36, 185. This has implications for the Soviet Union, which has ratified the Covenant, with regard to the conduct of its forces in Afghanistan.

⁷⁰ The government of Cyprus has brought proceedings against Turkey before the European Commission of Human Rights concerning the acts of its armed forces in Northern Cyprus. *Cyprus v Turkey* 6780/74 and 6950/75, 2 D & R 125 (admissibility decision) and Report of 10 July 1976, declassified following Committee of Ministers Resolution DH(79) of 21 January 1979. Under Article 40 of the International Covenant, states have to submit periodic reports on the measures they have adopted to give effect to the rights recognised and they are questioned by members of the Human Rights Committee. This would afford the opportunity to inquire into the measures taken to ensure respect for non-derogable rights on the part of members of the armed forces. The other enforcement mechanisms under that text have to be expressly accepted by a state party, independently of ratification.

⁷¹ Geneva Convention I, 1949, Article 49; Geneva Convention II, 1949, Article 50; Geneva Convention III, 1949, Article 129; Geneva Convention IV, 1949, Article 146; see also Protocol I, Articles 85-87.

⁷² The Nuremberg Charter was more lenient than required by international law in admitting the defence but the Tribunal accepted superior orders as neither a defence nor as the basis of a plea in mitigation 'where crimes as shocking and extensive have been committed consciously, ruthlessly and without military excuse or justification'. *Judgment of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal*, Cmd 6964 (1946) p 92; see generally G Schwarzenberger, *International Law as Applied by International Courts and Tribunals*, Vol II, 'The Law of Armed Conflict', London: Stevens, 1968, pp 516-19; 534-8; 543; de Lupis *The Law of War*, pp 357-9.

⁷³ A M Garro and H Dahl, 'Legal accountability for human rights violations in Argentina: one step forward and two steps backward', *HRLJ* 8 (2-4), 1987, p 283, especially at pp 314-19 and 337-44.

those actually served shorter.⁷⁴ The confidential reports of the ICRC to states may have some beneficial effect but only where there is the political will to implement the recommendations. The ICRC has probably had to resort to more public appeals in the last ten years than in the whole of its previous history. It has issued several such appeals, both to the parties themselves and to other states parties to the Geneva Conventions calling on them to exert pressure on the belligerents,⁷⁵ in the case of Lebanon, Kampuchea, Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war.⁷⁶

One of the most disturbing developments has been in that last conflict. In many conflicts various rules of humanitarian law have been breached but one rule had been fairly well adhered to in practice. There were allegations of the use of unlawful chemical weapons in the Vietnam War and the conflict in Afghanistan but the prohibition on the use of poison gas seemed to be respected.⁷⁷ In the Second World War, both the Axis powers and the Allies possessed poison gases but neither side used them. The breach of the rule in the Iran-Iraq conflict is, therefore, all the more serious. It may tempt other states who would not otherwise have risked using such weapons into doing so. It is not enough for the UN to produce reports on the use of gas in that conflict. Effective action must be taken by states to ensure that that rule is not breached again.

The best hope for the effective enforcement of humanitarian law lies in creating the political will to ensure compliance. That requires the mobilisa-

⁷⁴ There are difficulties in investigating alleged breaches of humanitarian law; it often requires the cooperation of other soldiers who were eye-witnesses. Even, however, in the case of armed forces which do investigate such allegations, the sentences handed down or served seem slight in relation to the gravity of the offences. See, for example, the sentences following the Litani operation, *Jerusalem Post*, 5 November 1979 and the Opinion by David Krivine, *ibid*, 9 November 1979. More recently, see the sentences handed down in the case of three Israeli Defence Force soldiers involved in the attempt to bury alive four West Bank Arabs, *ibid*, 30 March 1988; and in the case of the soldiers involved in beating up two youths and filmed by a US TV crew, *ibid*, 25 April 1988. See also the case of Lieutenant William L. Calley who was tried and sentenced for his part in the My Lai massacre but who served only part of his sentence.

⁷⁵ Under Article I common to the four Geneva Conventions, the parties 'undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the' provisions of the Conventions (emphasis added). It is on this basis that the ICRC can call on other High Contracting Parties to put pressure on the belligerents. The International Court of Justice, which was otherwise very divided, was united in agreeing that the provision of a publication by the USA to the Contras envisaging conduct in breach of the Geneva Conventions was itself in breach of common Article I: *Military and Paramilitary Activities In and Against Nicaragua* (Nicaragua v USA), Merits, Judgment, ICJ Rep 1986, p 14, paras 116-22; 218-20; 254-6; 292(9); see also dissenting judgment of Judge Oda, para 3.

⁷⁶ 'Under the presidency of Mr Alexandre Hay: the ICRC from 1976 to 1987,' *IRRC*, 27th Year, 261, (Nov-Dec), 1987, p 621 at p 629.

⁷⁷ Roberts and Guelff, *Documents*, p 138. It should be emphasised that the concern here is with gases lethal to man. There is controversy as to whether the 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol applies to the use of non-lethal gases; *ibid* and de Lupis, *The Law of War*, pp 215-18.

tion of international public opinion.⁷⁸ The parties to a conflict must know that other states, under pressure from the national human rights lobby, will call them to account for the way in which they conduct the hostilities.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis of the legal rules and their implementation in practice, it is possible to establish a theoretical framework regarding the nature and function of the different rules. This can fulfil a predictive function by establishing the nature of the problem and the characteristics one would expect to see reflected in the rules. It can also assist in understanding the rules themselves.

Clearly the rules of humanitarian law reflect a tension between what Schwarzenberger terms the standard of civilisation and the necessities of war.⁷⁹ This creates a spectrum of situations. At one extreme, there is no conflict between the principles since no military purpose is served by the conduct in question. States have, for example, shown themselves willing to accept the unqualified prohibition of rape and pillage since they serve no military purpose and the prohibition of those activities is necessary for the maintenance of any sense of civilised behaviour.⁸⁰ A little further along the spectrum, some military interest would be furthered by a particular activity but priority is given to humanitarian considerations, including the treatment of combatants. A rule falling into this category is the prohibition on the use of gas in the 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol.⁸¹ This is not a compromise; it reflects a decision to let humanitarian considerations prevail. The next category is a true compromise between the standards of civilisation and military necessity. Schwarzenberger cites as an example the St Petersburg Declaration of 1868 which prohibited the use of explosive or inflammable projectiles below 400 grammes in weight.⁸² Where weapons exceeded 400 grammes, they were more likely to achieve the object, the killing or disabling of the greatest possible number of the enemy's forces. Where they were

⁷⁸ Hampson, 'Fighting by the rules', *IRRC* (1989).

⁷⁹ G Schwarzenberger, *The Law of Armed Conflict*, pp 10-13.

⁸⁰ Both rape and pillage are prohibited under customary international law. They are also prohibited under treaty law, eg pillage—Article 28 of the Annex to Hague Convention IV of 1907, Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land; rape—Article 75 of Protocol I in international armed conflicts and common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions in non-international armed conflicts.

⁸¹ For text, see Roberts and Guelff, *Documents*, p 139.

⁸² G Schwarzenberger, *The Law of Armed Conflict*, p 11; for text, see Roberts and Guelff, *Documents*, p 30.

below that weight, the injuries caused to individual soldiers were appalling and served little military purpose. The states parties therefore decided that 'necessities of war ought to yield to the requirements of humanity'. Another example would be the prohibition of dum-dum bullets contained in Hague Declaration 3 of 1899. In the case of the fourth category of rule, the rule of force is unchecked but states may seek to disguise the fact. In practice, military necessity will prevail. Article 57.2(c) of Protocol I, for example, provides that 'effective advance warning shall be given of attacks which may affect the civilian population, *unless circumstances do not permit*' (emphasis added). On the face of it, this represents a compromise between the interests of civilians and military necessity but, in fact, the qualifying clause renders the protection illusory. Military necessity is not the same thing as a defence of necessity. The latter assumes that the law has been broken and necessity is pleaded as a justification. Military necessity, on the other hand, is not a justified breach of the law but is itself a rule of law.

The four categories of rules set limits to the conduct of hostilities by reference to one or more of three criteria: the place attacked, the weapons used and the persons targeted. The interplay between the types of rules and the three criteria will suggest what the rule should be in any given situation. Consider, for example, attacks on villages. If village A is nowhere near a combat zone and is not involved in the manufacture or storage of weapons, no element of military necessity would be furthered by an attack. The standard of civilisation can prevail largely because the persons and place targeted are civilian in character. Village B, however, is a base for guerrilla operations. The village itself may be lawfully attacked on the basis of military necessity but that would not necessarily justify indiscriminate aerial bombardment, with the risk of high civilian casualties.⁸³ The attack itself would come within the fourth type of rule but the manner of it would be dictated by the true compromise of the third type, even if that resulted in higher military casualties.⁸⁴ Even if the attack were itself lawful, notwithstanding inevitable

Protocol I distinguishes between precautions in attack (Art 57) and precautions against the effects of attacks (Art 58). The responsibility for balancing the likely loss of civilian life and the direct military advantage to be gained by the attack is placed on 'those who plan or decide upon an attack'.

Walzer argues that the doctrine of 'double effect', which arguably was reflected in international law before the Protocols, needs to be qualified by the inclusion of a positive obligation to protect civilians. Article 57 of Protocol I goes some way to meeting Walzer's objection. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, pp 151-6. For a remarkable illustration of the principle in practice during the Six Day War, see *The Seventh Day: soldiers talk about the Six Day War*, A Shapiro (ed), London: André Deutsch, 1970, p 132.

flicts.⁸⁷ The fourth, and perhaps the most important insofar as it holds the key to the first three, is how to ensure that states and other parties to a conflict comply with the legal rules which states have voluntarily accepted. As peace breaks out in certain conflicts of long duration, this may be precisely the time to learn the lessons of those conflicts. States need to find a way of ensuring that if you cannot win by fighting by the rules, you cannot win at all.

⁸⁷ For proposals on conflicts not coming within Common Article 3, see H-P Gasser, 'A measure of humanity in internal disturbances and tensions: proposal for a Code of Conduct', *IRRC*, 28th Year, 262 (Jan Feb), 1988, p 38; T Meron, 'Draft Model Declaration in internal strife', *ibid*, p 59.

Sovereign default: a backward glance

As long as there have been banks with money to lend and governments that need to raise overseas credit—whether to finance wars, or to promote development—there has been sovereign lending. And as long as there has been sovereign lending there has been default, debt renegotiation and rescheduling.¹ Classical historians trace these features of international banking back to the Greek city-states which borrowed heavily from one of the richest of the temples—Delos—and defaulted. Medieval historians have told the story of the failure of European monarchs to honour debts to Italian banks; Edward III of England was notorious. French kings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century defaulted with some frequency, every thirty years on average. Certainly, over the last 500 years there have been regular periods of default. One writer, Anatole Kaletsky, speaks of a 'fifty year cycle of monotonous predictability';² in recent times there have been periods of debt servicing difficulty in the 1820s, the 1870s, the 1920s and 30s, and now in the 1980s.

What lessons can we learn from the past? Is there a long-term rhythmic cycle of economic activity in major market economies that the essentially short-term nature of most private and government decision-making fails to encompass? Is there a cynical lesson to be learned from history: that there is no limit to human folly, greed and gullibility and that every generation of lenders and borrowers has to learn afresh from its own mistakes? Or is the lesson a more apocalyptic one: that each 'crash' is growing in systemic risk, leading to a 'big bang' when international capitalism meets its final nemesis? Or has history a basically reassuring message: that the upswings in lending do lead to genuine gains in economic development, as well as providing profits for lenders;

I am indebted to Dr Vincent Cable of the Economic Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat for his research for this paper.

¹ The early history of debt is dealt with in C Dammers, 'A brief history of sovereign defaults and rescheduling', in D Suratgar (ed) *Default and Rescheduling*, London: Euromoney Publications, 1984; and E Borchard and W Wynne, *State Insolvency and Foreign Bondholders*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1951.

² A Kaletsky, *The Costs of Default*, New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1985. The same argument lies behind M Winkler, *Foreign Bond. An Autopsy*, Philadelphia: R Swain Company, 1933, which is one of the best known histories.

that default or partial default is, in some circumstances, a feasible mechanism by which debtors can adjust to a more adverse international environment; and that any rupture in financial relations caused thereby is not fatally damaging either for lenders or borrowers?

Interest in these historical questions is not merely academic: they have a direct bearing on the present. The so-called 'developing country debt problem' which embraces some quite distinct problems and also the debt servicing difficulties of Eastern Europe have reached a difficult juncture. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank speak openly of 'debt fatigue' and growing numbers of indebted countries show signs of inability or unwillingness to sustain continuing painful adjustment in order to provide the trade surpluses necessary to meet debt service. In the case of low income African countries, official creditors have accepted, following the Lawson initiative, the necessity for debt relief in the form of sub-commercial interest rates and long repayment maturities, while the writing off of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) debt by retrospectively converting it into grants is established practice and is being extended. Banks have, for the most part, prepared themselves for substantial losses, while interest in mechanisms for reducing past debt through various kinds of swaps is growing.

The question that now has to be faced is whether a combination of continuing 'debt fatigue' and adverse international economic conditions—represented by a combination of slowing growth in major industrial countries, rising interest rates and protectionist sentiment in the US, especially—will precipitate more widespread default. Such default would probably take the form of more moratoria on debt interest as well as principal servicing and unilateral decisions by debtors to meet some but not all of their obligations.

Hitherto, there has been a self-interest on the side of both creditors and debtors in avoiding even this kind of 'conciliatory default'. Failure by debtors to meet interest over a prolonged period inflicts a loss of bank income and—depending on national accounting conventions—may require the debt to be reclassified as impaired loans. Banks have made involuntary loans part of rescheduling in order to avoid that happening. But over the last year substantial provisioning has made it possible for banks to face losses on their developing country loans without its affecting their overall solvency. They have not passed on to the debtors the benefits of their greater financial security through concessional debt relief, although they are now in a better position to do

so. A growing incidence of default would eventually make it necessary for them to negotiate a more realistic set of arrangements under which some, albeit reduced, income and repayment is secured.

For their part, debtors have been deterred from taking unilateral action to force concessional relief by the costs to themselves. The experience of countries that have imposed interest moratoria so far has not been encouraging. Brazil and most others have returned to the negotiating table. Their experience suggests that there are considerable costs to a defaulter, notably the nonavailability and cost of trade credit. There is also the loss of confidence—domestic as well as foreign—which follows severance from an internationally agreed adjustment programme. And there is the possibility of punitive action by a creditor country on behalf of its financial institutions (under US legislation, for example, a defaulting debtor runs the risk of such official sanctions as loss of trade preferences and US votes against World Bank and other development bank loans).³

Nonetheless, attempts to evaluate the costs and benefits have suggested that a form of default could be the least damaging outcome for some debtors.⁴ At the very least, the action or threat of defaulting might persuade the banks (and other creditors) to negotiate more realistic terms.⁵ Even if default resulted in a fall in import capacity through reduced trade credit for exports and imports, reduced capital inflows and capital flight, there might still be net gains if debt servicing costs were very onerous. The main deterrent, however, has been something that is inherently untestable: the fear of losing, for a very long time to come, access to international capital markets. While the consequences are hypothetical, historical precedent has been used to argue that concessional debt relief—whether negotiated or, even worse, imposed unilaterally—would exclude debtor countries, perhaps for a generation, from new sources of commercial capital.

This article tries to look in some detail at the validity of this claim. In reviewing the mass of historical material it is useful to look at some episodes in particular: the two major phases of lending and default in the nineteenth century and in the interwar period of the twentieth; and to look at both in relation to the present day.

R Bernal *To Default or Not to Default: that is the question for developing country debtors*, Mona, Jamaica: University of West Indies (Mimeo), April 1987

T O Enders and R Mattione, *Latin America: the crisis of debt and growth*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1984.

S Griffith-Jones, 'Debt crisis management in the early 1980s: can lessons be learnt?', *Development Policy Review*, 6 (1), March 1988.

Nineteenth-century experience

Sovereign lending in the last century was dominated by British capital, together with some French, German and Dutch capital. The industrial revolution generated a surplus of savings and a financial market that was able to provide capital (in the form of long-term bonds or equity) to the newly emerging economies which were also suppliers of food and raw materials to the metropolitan centres. Newly independent Latin America sampled foreign loans and default for the first time. European countries were also important borrowers, especially in the earlier part of the century, and they accounted for many of the defaults. Denmark (after the Napoleonic wars), Holland and Czarist Russia each defaulted once; Austria, Spain, Greece, Portugal and some pre-unification German states did so repeatedly.

But the destination for much of this invested loan capital was the USA. Despite the somewhat moralistic tone which surrounds US statements on debt these days, its history of sovereign borrowing is rather chequered. Many private and some public borrowers (the latter being state governments rather than Washington) defaulted at various times, notably Maryland, Pennsylvania, Louisiana and Mississippi. Pennsylvania only purged itself of default and repaid its debts in 1945. Mississippi never has. Indeed, when the London-based Council of Foreign Bondholders, which had pursued most of the historic claims, finally wrapped up its operations in 1988 the Mississippi default was one of the few which had never yielded to a negotiated solution.

The United States also suffered the indignity of direct political interference: British banks organised campaigns to ensure that successful candidates for office would take a more moderate position on debt questions and were successful in several cases.

It was in the 1870-1914 period that the nineteenth-century liberal international economic order (of free trade and free capital and labour movements) reached its apogee. Britain—then the world's leading economy—invested abroad around 5 per cent of its Gross National Product (GNP), rising to 10 per cent before World War I, and received in return 5 to 8 per cent of its GNP in the form of overseas investment income.⁶ Much of this capital went into providing railroads and other utilities for resource rich countries in North America, Australasia and Latin America. These countries often borrowed far more heavily,

⁶ These and later estimates are from F X Colago, *Access to External Finance: historical perspective*. Economic Development Institute/Queen Elizabeth House, Roundtable Conference, Oxford, February 1988.

largely in the form of very long-term bonds, than developing countries today. Capital inflows to Canada and Australia amounted to around 7.5 per cent of GNP and approaching half of new investment—Argentina for an even higher proportion. There was also substantial international lending by British, French and German investors to Russia and Eastern Europe and some to China, Egypt, Turkey and parts of Africa.

Much of this lending activity was well conceived and friction-free. Bond issues for popular projects like the Great Lakes canal project in Canada were massively over-subscribed and, in general, there was no shortage of interest in what were seen as high risk but rewarding investments. Economic historians have calculated that, in this period, returns on overseas investment as a whole by Britons and other Europeans were 1.5 to 4 per cent higher than on domestic investment.

But there were some debt servicing problems leading to default and reschedulings and to policy conditionality linked to new lending of the kind familiar in Latin America today. When Brazil experienced a financial crisis in the 1890s the government pledged its customs receipts as a guarantee of prompt debt service and was obliged to agree to a moratorium on raising new debt. When Turkey defaulted in 1875, 1876 and 1881 this led to intervention by Britain and France, and a new loan was used to impose financial discipline on the Ottoman Empire with commissioners sent in to oversee expenditure. When Egypt defaulted in 1875/76 the British used gunboat diplomacy and took over the government. Large numbers of debtors in Latin America, east and southern Europe and China experienced a range of sanctions from strong diplomatic pressure to foreign navies blockading ports and taking over custom houses.

Not all of these debt servicing problems occurred in what is now the 'Third World'. The Austrian Hapsburg Empire defaulted, and some US states continued to go into default until well into the latter part of the nineteenth century. But the most difficult and intractable problems occurred in Latin America, in Peru, Mexico and Guatemala; Guatemala, for example, defaulted in 1828, 1864, 1876, 1894, 1900 and 1917, each occasion leading to debt restructuring and, later, to attempts to raise fresh capital.

Towards the end of this period there was also a crucial shift in the balance of financial and political power in the Americas. When the British, Germans and Italians blockaded Venezuela in 1902 in pursuit of a debt claim, not only Latin America but also the USA felt threatened and President Roosevelt used the occasion to establish that

European countries could not use armed aggression to enforce a public debt claim in the hemisphere. He qualified his position, however, by insisting that what he called 'backward states' would fulfil their obligations to European creditors. In the case of the Dominican Republic, and later Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, the USA intervened in order to ensure that they did so.

Not all debt servicing difficulties were accompanied by the drama of default and violent intervention by creditors. 'Default' has always been an elastic and ambiguous rather than an absolute concept. Today most debtor countries have tried to maintain loan interest payments even while principal has fallen into arrears. And even those that have failed to maintain interest payments have set aside foreign exchange reflecting their 'ability to pay'. Except in a few minor cases debt has not been repudiated. Similar subtleties, which could best be described as constituting a strategy of conciliatory default, occurred in the nineteenth century. Debtors rarely defaulted completely.

Many 'defaults', for example, involved partial rather than complete failure to maintain interest payments or difficulties in keeping up sinking fund payments to ensure final redemption of the bonds. Some debtors would pay in devalued currencies, in breach of gold clauses. Withholding taxes would be imposed on overseas interest payments—a ruse adopted by Hapsburg Austria and Czarist Russia (the Soviet revolution, however, subsequently went one step further and renounced old international debt altogether). And creditors, too, were flexible. Rescheduling agreements and the capitalisation of outstanding interest into new bonds were common and often incorporated real debt relief. One commentator noted: 'The London capital market was not an unyielding master.'⁷ It was this flexibility, on both sides, that kept capital markets from being closed for prolonged periods to countries with debt servicing problems and kept new money flowing into overseas lending.

The interwar period

Much of this nineteenth-century experience has been forgotten. It is the more traumatic interwar period that has been lodged, albeit selectively, in the memories of the decision-makers of today. After the interruption of the First World War, the interwar period saw another cycle—mainly heavy borrowing in the 1920s and default in the 1930s. In many ways the story was the same as in the nineteenth century but there were some

⁷ *Ibid.*

important differences.⁸ The USA became the main source of foreign capital through direct investment as well as securities of various kinds, though Britain remained important, mainly in the empire. These two countries accounted for two thirds of all kinds of overseas investment. There was also a legacy of official debt from the First World War, most significantly in the form of reparation payments by Germany to the victorious European allies and debt by these allies to the USA (which was rescheduled after the war from twenty-five to sixty-two years payment and 4½ per cent to 3–3½ per cent interest). It was the reparations, and the transfer burden they imposed, which contributed to the rise of German nationalism and one of Hitler's first acts on assuming power was to renounce them. Significantly, it has been estimated that Germany's transfer burden in terms of GNP was actually less than that borne by major debtor countries in the 1980s.

For those countries that did borrow commercially in the 1920s, the world recession of 1929–32 generated a lethal combination of collapsing commodity prices and rising protectionism (which began in the USA in the early 1920s).⁹ Together, these factors depressed the export revenues of forty-one primary product exporting countries by around 50 per cent between 1928/29 and 1932/33—and real interest rates rose to over 15 per cent. Even if indebted countries had the will to service debt, markets closed around them. The roll call of defaulting debtors was strikingly familiar. Eastern Europe—Poland and Hungary, then Rumania and Yugoslavia—led the way just as Poland did in the 1980s. Almost all of Latin America followed, excepting only Argentina, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. There was, preceding each crisis, a display of wishful thinking by creditors which we have come to recognise in our own time. Peru, for example, remained a popular issuer of bonds when its payments arrears were already averaging six months. A particularly memorable remark with lingering overtones was that of Sir Otto Niemeyer of the Bank of England a few weeks before the 1931 moratorium on debt servicing by Brazil: 'Brazil has all but turned the corner of its economic difficulties.'¹⁰ And after the defaults there were creditor-nominated commissions of experts—like IMF missions today—to recommend adjustment policies and encourage speedy resumption of

⁸ Material on the interwar period is taken mainly from B Eichengreen and R Portes, *Debt and Default in the 1930s*, London: Centre for Economic Policy Research, Discussion Paper No. 75, 1985.

⁹ W A Lewis, *Economic Survey 1919–39*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1949.

¹⁰ Cited by A Kaletsky in, 'A borrowers' market', in *The First Hundred Years* (supplement to the *Financial Times*, 15 February 1988).

debt repayment. The adjustments were often real enough; a peak-to-trough decline in output for major Latin American debtors between 1929 and 1938 ranged from 7 per cent for Brazil to 26 per cent for Peru.¹¹

With the myopia which later generations often inherit, postwar capital markets were haunted by simplified versions of the horror stories of the 1930s. Many investors did, of course, suffer losses. There were some truly disastrous investments, such as the \$500 million invested in Mexican bonds which were subject to a settlement eleven years after default at a tenth of the face value. But more recent scholarly work has shown that the story was complex and varied.¹² Most Latin American bonds kept up partial interest payments and there were debt restructurings that in some cases (Chile and Colombia, for example) were relatively favourable to the creditors. Analysis has shown that, overall, sterling bonds floated in the 1920s for overseas sovereign lending produced an internal rate of return no worse than that on money lent through consols to the British government. Overseas dollar issues had a less happy history but there was still a positive return on the investments.

Another way in which popular perceptions have blurred accurate pictures of the past is in relation to the consequences for debtors of debt default and/or negotiated debt relief. The 1930s, which were followed by the virtual closure of the bond market to developing countries for half a century, are often cited as the classic illustration of the consequences of failure to meet debt contracts in full. It is usually forgotten that Latin America and Eastern Europe were in the company of countries that had a different experience. Over and above the default on intergovernment reparations, German bonds went into default in 1933/34 and payment was not resumed until 1955. Japanese bonds went into default in 1942 and service was resumed only a decade later. Italian bonds were in default from 1940 to 1947. All these countries, of course, benefited hugely from substantial US concessional assistance after the war for reconstruction, as did Allies such as Britain. Far from suffering in the eyes of the markets for this 'relief' the countries concerned went from strength to strength and quickly captured a high status in capital markets.

¹¹ A detailed history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Peruvian debt is soon to be published by O Ugarteche, Oxford University Press.

¹² B Eichengreen and R Portes, *Debt and Default in the 1930s*.

More recent experience

The post-war period saw little default or large-scale debt restructuring until the 1980s, so that the 1930s, however misunderstood, still represent the main point of historical reference. Nonetheless there are some recent experiences from which valid insights can be obtained. One important case of major debt restructuring was the plan for Indonesia drawn up by the German banker Herr Abs, under which large sums (\$2 billion) of official long-term debt were restructured on concessional terms (including thirty-year repayment periods).¹³ The rescheduling was based on the treatment of German debts in 1953 whereby past debt was restructured on concessional terms (twenty-year repayment; interest cut by 25 per cent; interest arrears cancelled or capitalised). The aim in both cases was to help the debtor to rebuild domestic production and export capacity. Stigma attached to debt relief was outweighed in the eyes of capital markets by an improved external financing position. Indeed, the Abs Plan provided a platform for subsequent commercial borrowing and for avoiding the breakdown in debt servicing that Venezuela, Mexico, Nigeria and other OPEC countries later experienced. India is also now regarded as one of the more attractive developing country customers for bank loans and bond issues, and this is due in no small part to earlier relief of official debt as part of its aid consortia negotiations.¹⁴ Of course, these cases are in crucial respects different from those of middle income bank debtor countries today—notably because the relief concerned official debt. Nonetheless, the insight that concessional debt relief can improve rather than diminish creditworthiness in some cases is important.

In relation to international bank lending, the boom in credit in the 1970s was undertaken in the firm belief by those involved that the process was underpinned more securely than lending of the past. Two major differences existed to justify a belief in the superior wisdom of our own generation of financiers and international economic managers. One was the switch to bank loans which are more flexible in being more easily refinanced than bonds held by thousands of individual investors. In practice, however, bank loans have been relatively very short term with eight to ten years repayment, whereas some of the big infrastructure projects of the nineteenth century were financed with

¹³ C Hardy, *Rescheduling Developing Country Debts 1956-81: lessons and recommendations*, Washington DC: ODC Monograph 15, 1982.

¹⁴ UNCTAD Trade and Development Report 1988, p 95.

ninety-nine year money. And rescheduling has often been extremely complex and difficult. Bank loans have also had the feature of having variable interest rates (unlike traditional fixed-rate bonds) which has meant that debtor countries have been faced with a devastating, simultaneous combination of collapsing international markets and high real interest rates on their past debt that they could not reasonably have foreseen. Most seriously of all, the prevalence of bank lending has meant that large scale debtor insolvency would lead to a solvency crisis in the international banking system. Given a choice between restoring the financial health of their major banks and the economic health of debtor countries, it was not surprising that the major western countries have chosen to put the interests of their banks first. The irony of this situation is that a resolution to the Latin American debt problem is now being sought in part through the issuing of bonds in return for bank debt; that is, reverting to a form of lending and borrowing favoured by earlier generations.

The other major difference is that, through the Bretton Woods system, we were supposed to have advanced to a stage of international economic management such that the booms and slumps of the past, the cycles of excessive private lending and subsequent default, were at an end. The IMF would be a lender of last resort to ensure global financial stability. The World Bank and bilateral agencies would provide development capital to those countries and projects that commercial lending could not reach. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) would ensure that the combination of recession and protectionism of the 1930s was not repeated. In practice, the Bretton Woods institutions have had neither the resources nor the mandate to rise to the challenge of the 1980s. The revolving nature of the IMF has meant that, at certain crucial stages (as in 1986 and 1987) it has been a net recipient rather than a lender of funds; its Compensatory Financing Facility has played a negligible role in offsetting external shocks; and the conditionality perspective has been inflexibly short term (although there are now signs of improvement, at least in relation to low income countries). For its part, the Bank has had difficulty maintaining its lending in real terms and in finding a role in heavily indebted countries. GATT lacks authority, even with the mandate of a new round, and is struggling to prevent a slide towards intensified protectionism.

The neglect of multilateralism has thrust responsibility onto the major economic powers to act as 'backstop' for the international monetary and trading system. This takes us back to the nineteenth century when

Britain performed that role. But while the British—no doubt for their own reasons of self-interest—were able to ensure liberal, systemic stability, the USA today cannot. It is because of the inability or unwillingness of the USA to run its fiscal, monetary and trade policy in the wider international interest, and of other major western countries to shoulder their share of responsibility for joint management, that the prospects for global recovery, and for debtors in particular, are so uncertain.

Some lessons from the past

It would clearly be foolish to base future action too much on historical precedents when so much has changed in the pattern and instruments of international lending. Nonetheless there are insights to be gained and there is perhaps a deeper benefit to be derived once it is recognised that debt servicing difficulties, default and debt relief are not the exclusive problem of a particular group of developing countries today but have been experienced by most others in the past including those that are today developed and have creditor status. Few countries are, in US parlance, 'squeaky clean' in the matter of debt.

One important question that history can illuminate, is how default affects the long-term flow of private finance, which is important for development. Clearly, the perceptions of new lenders will be heavily influenced by the nature of past default, by the losses experienced on old loans and by the extent to which debt relief was negotiated rather than unilaterally imposed and legal formalities were observed. Nonetheless, in recent years creditors and international institutions have repeatedly warned—arguing with reference to history—that serious unresolved default and, or, concessional debt relief would have profound, long-term effects on new lending. The historical evidence, however, suggests that this is something of a canard. Experience indicates that, under some circumstances, past defaulters can return to capital markets quite quickly while debt relief can increase rather than reduce creditworthiness.

A second lesson is that the process of adjustment and economic reform required for continuous debt service must take into account political circumstances. In the nineteenth century booms and slumps in financial flows and real economic activity were largely dealt with by quick adjustment in both metropolitan and peripheral economies. There were, as described above, elements of flexibility in sovereign debt renegotiations through the nineteenth century to present day reschedul-

ings. But brutal economic changes could, in the final analysis, be accommodated since democratic structures were generally less advanced, and many developing countries were colonies (or had heavily circumscribed independence like Latin America). This is no longer the case. Adjustment has to be undertaken in politically realistic time-frames. There has been some advance in the last year or so in the thinking of the international financial institutions in terms of programmes that are longer term and growth oriented, but this has so far manifested itself primarily in programmes for low-income developing countries rather than the bigger debtors.

In addition to a long-term perspective any process of adjustment linked to private international lending needs flexibility: built-in stabilisers and contingency mechanisms. Compensatory financing is one option: and we are paying dearly for the dismal lack of imagination by industrial countries over the IMF's Compensatory Financing Facility (CFF). The new Fund proposals involving compensatory financing for interest payments are a step forward but circumscribed by excessive conditionality. The recent Mexican debt arrangements, linking new finance to economic growth, also have some interesting features in this area. But there is nothing comparable, yet, in an international context to the type of flexibility in lending practices that is common within industrial countries themselves as shown by US bankruptcy law, for example, where considerable efforts are made to prevent financial foreclosure by adjusting debt service, or by the renegotiation of individual mortgages. Flexibility can also be gained by a switch from loan to equity finance (direct foreign investment) as is now occurring by means of debt equity swaps. In this way servicing can be related more closely to the performance of projects.

The question of appropriate adjustment leads to a third and more fundamental lesson: the importance of a proper balance of official and private responsibility. Private financial flows have played a valuable role in the development of many countries, but it is vital to have a supportive international environment and multilateral discipline in order to ensure that foreign obligations can be serviced. In the 1930s those conditions did not exist and default resulted. At the present time, debtors cannot be expected to grow into renewed creditworthiness, whatever their domestic efforts, unless there is effectively coordinated international economic management to ensure more rapid expansion in the world economy with lower interest rates, and a rollback of protectionism.

Private lenders and direct investors, not unnaturally, are motivated by self-interest. As such, they can be a valuable source of capital for commercially-viable projects and for regions which are resource rich or have large markets (like North America and Australasia in earlier times). But much of the developing world also needs longer servicing periods and more concessional interest rates than are available commercially. Increased official finance (including aid) and private flows must go together. Indeed, substantial aid finance may be a precondition for making good use of external commercial finance, as has recently occurred in such countries as India, China, Thailand, Kenya and Botswana and earlier in South Korea and Taiwan. However, the debt crisis has highlighted a crucial imbalance in official and private responsibilities. The 'privatisation' of international lending in the 1970s without adequate official regulation or support from international financial institutions led to a cycle of overlending and default similar to that which occurred earlier in history. After the disaster of the 1930s the lessons seemed, for a while, to have been learnt—with Bretton Woods and with the Marshall Plan. The same lessons need relearning.

It is within this perspective of past 'sovereign default' that we have to view the problems of today. It is clear that large numbers of debt-distressed sub-Saharan African countries will have to be given substantial debt relief on their official and commercial debt as part of an aid financed programme of economic reconstruction. And it is becoming abundantly clear that many middle income countries will have to be given relief in respect of the burden of past debt. This will involve losses by the banks, but must happen in a way that will create the conditions for a return to capital markets as soon as possible. Without entering into the merits of individual proposals for debt relief and renegotiation, it seems increasingly clear that this can be done only through some form of conversion of past debt into instruments that realistically reflect capacity to pay. Debtors will need supporting adjustment measures to put their own house in order by creating a stronger base for non-inflationary growth, domestic capital formation and efficient markets. But the political will to undertake continuing adjustment is more likely in a context where there is a measurable pay-off in reduced debt burdens and evidence of growth being ploughed back into the domestic economy rather than used to satisfy foreign creditors.

The Cyprus conundrum: the challenge of the intercommunal talks

In August 1988, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar began his latest attempt to resolve one of the United Nations' most intractable problems—the Cyprus conflict. As Kurt Waldheim's representative on the island in the 1970s, he had gained long experience of Cyprus negotiations. Three fresh initiatives since he became UN Secretary-General had already ended in deadlock and recrimination. Yet this time many Cypriots were more optimistic about a settlement than at any time since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. This article examines the reasons for their optimism, describes the issues under negotiation and assesses prospects for a lasting resolution of the conflict.

Background to the intercommunal talks

Talks to 'solve' the Cyprus problem have been sponsored by the United Nations for almost a quarter of a century, since it first accepted a peacekeeping role on the island in March 1964. One retired UN official has called them 'the most frustrating negotiations in my experience, . . . like the gyroscopic stabiliser on a ship in a storm. They go round and round and produce a certain stability, even if they do not produce forward motion'.¹ No doubt many of his colleagues would agree.

But what makes the Cyprus problem so difficult? The island attained independence in 1960, rather against the wishes of many of its inhabitants. Most Greek Cypriots, including the first president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, had sought *enosis*, union with Greece, rather than independence; while most Turkish Cypriots, reacting to this, had preferred *taksim*, partition between Greece and Turkey. Independence was a compromise, hedged about with elaborate power-sharing constitutional arrangements that gave the Turkish-Cypriot community exceptional minority rights, including an effective veto over all significant political decisions; and guaranteed by a treaty that allowed Britain, Greece and Turkey

¹ B Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987, p 259.

o intervene should the constitutional settlement break down.²

It did so within four years. Proposed changes to the Constitution, which would have diminished Turkish-Cypriot minority rights, led to intercommunal fighting, the withdrawal of Turkish-Cypriot representatives from political and judicial institutions and the establishment of quasi-autonomous Turkish-Cypriot enclaves throughout the island. British, and, from March 1964, UN forces intervened, but fighting continued in the late 1960s without provoking decisive intervention from any of the guarantor powers. That came in 1974 when a *coup d'état* against Makarios was inspired by the military government in Greece, and Turkish troops invaded and occupied the northern third of the island, handing civil administration over to the Turkish-Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş. The new Turkish-Cypriot entity unilaterally declared its autonomy in 1975 and proclaimed full independence—as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)—in 1983. Internationally, it is recognised only by Turkey.³

The 'Cyprus problem'—that is, the search for a settlement that will reunite the island's two communities in a single state—has two distinct elements: intercommunal relations, and the island's relationship with its two different 'motherlands'. Intercommunal talks have continued sporadically since the 1960s, with a succession of interlocutors and UN intermediaries considering proposals for new constitutional arrangements, for local government and (since 1974) for territorial redistribution.⁴ Throughout, these talks have been bedevilled by the dominant influence of one or other 'motherland'—Greece before 1974, and Turkey since. They have seen several major concessions by the Greek Cypriots—in particular, the acceptance of a federal rather than a unitary form of government, and of a bizonal territorial distribution—without reciprocal concessions of equal substance from the Turkish-Cypriot side.

This reflects political reality. For many Turks and Turkish Cypriots,

² The constitutional settlement can be found in *Cyprus*, British Parliamentary Papers, Cmnd. 1093, London: HMSO, 1960. It provided for a president to be elected by the Greek-Cypriot community (then some 470,000 strong) and a vice-president—with veto powers over major decisions on defence, foreign policy and other issues—to be elected by the 110,000 Turkish Cypriots. The Council of Ministers had seven Greek-Cypriot and three Turkish-Cypriot ministers, while the House of Representatives was divided 35:15 and posts in the civil service, police, armed forces and judiciary allocated in similar proportions between the communities.

More detailed accounts of the development of the Cyprus problem can be found in D Souter, 'An island apart: a review of the Cyprus problem', *Third World Quarterly* 6 (3) 1984, pp 657–74; and K Kyle, *Cyprus*, London: Minority Rights Group, 1984 (revised edition forthcoming).

³ They are described in detail from the Greek-Cypriot viewpoint in P Polyviou, *Cyprus: Conflict and Negotiation, 1960–1980*, London: Duckworth, 1980, and from the Turkish-Cypriot side by N M Ertürk, *The Cyprus Dispute and the Birth of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*, Nicosia: K Rustem, second edition, 1984.

including Denktaş, the Cyprus problem has essentially been resolved by partition.⁵ While residual problems of international recognition and intercommunal relations could be resolved by a comprehensive settlement, they have little incentive to pursue this so long as Turkey provides full military, political and economic backing for the Turkish-Cypriot regime. Greek Cypriots have more to gain from the reintegration of the Cypriot state, including renewed access to the whole island, and perhaps guaranteed security against further Turkish military action. Their negotiators have made substantial concessions over constitutional federation in recognition of the Greek-Cypriot community's weakness *vis-à-vis* Turkey and in the hope, so far vain, of stimulating counter-concessions from the Turkish-Cypriot side.

In practice, therefore, Greek Cypriots emphasise the international aspect of the problem, notably the continued presence of Turkish troops, while Turkish Cypriots stress the intercommunal dimension. In reality, any lasting solution must resolve *both* intercommunal and international elements. Yet, by definition, intercommunal talks can deal only with the former: the best they can achieve is a framework which would also facilitate Turkish military withdrawal.

United Nations initiatives, 1984-86

The current intercommunal talks are Pérez de Cuéllar's fourth attempt to solve the Cyprus problem since he became UN Secretary-General in 1982. His first proposals for narrowing the gap between the two sides foundered when Rauf Denktaş unilaterally declared the independence of his 'Turkish Republic' in November 1983. Later efforts were no more successful.

Pérez de Cuéllar's second initiative began in August 1984, with a series of 'working points' derived from earlier negotiations. Three rounds of 'proximity talks' followed in New York in the autumn, during which the Secretary-General held separate meetings with President Kyprianou and Mr Denktaş, gradually piecing together the agenda for a 'high-level' (ie summit) meeting. These talks focused on detailed constitutional matters—for example, whether the presidency should rotate between the communities—in a search for formulae, however vague, that were acceptable to both sides. New Turkish-Cypriot proposals, offer-

⁵ See, for example, a press conference given by the former Turkish foreign minister, Vahit Hakkısoğlu, on 22 March 1986. Denktaş's own account of the recent history of Cyprus is in R R Denktaş, *The Cyprus Triangle*, Nicosia: K Rustem, second edition, 1988.

ing significant territorial adjustments, restrictions on the Turkish-Cypriot legislative veto and other constitutional concessions, eventually enabled Pérez de Cuéllar to arrange a high-level meeting in New York from 17–20 January 1985.

This meeting collapsed in acrimony. A 'preliminary draft agreement' had been prepared by the UN Secretariat, setting out the framework for a settlement but leaving a number of crucial points open—notably the extent of territorial adjustments and the timetable for the withdrawal of Turkish troops. Kyprianou regarded the draft as a basis for negotiation, and refused to sign without clarification of these points and the nature of any international guarantees. Denktaş, by contrast, saw it as an agreement for signature and declined to negotiate further. A conference intended to resolve outstanding points of difficulty turned into a fruitless argument about the status of preparatory documents.⁶

The resulting confusion continued after the high-level *débâcle*. In April 1985, UN officials presented a revised document incorporating the concessions offered by the Turkish Cypriots in November 1984. This 'consolidated draft' proved acceptable to Kyprianou but not to Denktaş.⁷ Discussions then continued between UN officials and experts from both communities and, in March 1986, a new 'draft framework agreement' was drawn up. This was Pérez de Cuéllar's third attempt to reconcile the outstanding differences between the communities.⁸

In fact, it satisfied neither. In several significant areas, including territorial redistribution, the balance of power between the federal government and the federated states and the timetable for the withdrawal of Turkish troops, Kyprianou felt that it reversed points he had accepted as a final bargaining position in April 1985. In his response, he stressed the international aspect of the problem—the presence of Turkish troops—and urged the Secretary-General to consider an international conference or a further high-level meeting as a possible way forward. Denktaş accepted the new document in principle, but made firm proposals on troop withdrawals and international guarantees that were bound to prove unacceptable to the Greek-Cypriot side.⁹

As in the case of earlier intercommunal talks, these UN initiatives focused on detailed constitutional proposals, leaving unresolved funda-

⁶ The 'preliminary draft agreement' is reprinted in Republic of Cyprus, *Turkish Policy on Cyprus and Efforts to Solve the Cyprus Problem*, Nicosia: Press and Information Office, 1988, pp 43–9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 50–7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 83–91.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 94–120.

mental differences of view on the nature of the Cypriot state. The negotiations barely deviated from ideas and even phrases which had produced only deadlock in the past. This central weakness was compounded by the attempt to formulate answers to difficult constitutional and territorial questions in advance of face-to-face negotiations between Kyprianou and Denktas. This prevented the development of any negotiating momentum which might have led to the two community leaders trading new concessions. The talks failed because they provided no scope for new ideas, no opportunities to develop them and no new incentives for the community leaders to risk established positions in the hope of achieving progress.

The impact on Greek-Cypriot politics

The talks nevertheless had a marked impact on internal Greek-Cypriot politics, ultimately leading to Kyprianou's removal from the presidency. He had inherited this when Archbishop Makarios died in 1977, and had been re-elected in 1983 with the support of the Greek-Cypriot communist party, AKEL. His own centrist Democratic Party (DIKO) was regularly placed third in national elections, while AKEL's support was essentially negative—based on the strategy that if it could not win a presidential election itself it was determined to exclude the leader of the conservative Democratic Rally (DISY), Glafcos Clerides.

Kyprianou's handling of the 1984–86 initiatives was a major factor ending his alliance with AKEL and marked the start of a new era in Greek-Cypriot politics. Despite ideological differences, AKEL and DISY had consistently shared a more conciliatory approach to the Cyprus problem than either Kyprianou or the smaller EDEK party.¹⁰ Both strongly criticised Kyprianou's conduct in the proximity talks and the high-level meeting, accusing him of paying more attention to the Greek Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, than to more moderate Greek-Cypriot opinion. They welcomed Pérez de Cuéllar's 'working points' and claimed that Kyprianou had handed Denktas a diplomatic victory in New York by refusing to sign the 'preliminary draft agreement'.

A full-scale challenge to the President's authority ensued. AKEL and DISY used their majority in the House of Representatives to demand that either he endorse the 'preliminary draft agreement' or call an early presidential election. Failing that, they demanded a government of national unity capable of imposing decisions about intercommunal

¹⁰ EDEK combines socialist ideology with a strong current of Hellenic nationalist rhetoric.

negotiations on the President. Eventually, in November 1985, the House dissolved itself in order to allow new elections to be held; an election which amounted to a referendum on Kyprianou's handling of the talks.¹¹ These established new lines of political division, between opponents and supporters of a conciliatory approach to the 'national question', which remain fundamental to Greek-Cypriot politics today. The former, 'rejectionist', parties won under 38 per cent of the vote, giving a substantial majority to the 'non-rejectionist' parties, DISY and AKEL.¹²

The failure of the 1986 initiative reinforced this trend. For the first time in many years Greek Cypriots found themselves, rather than Turkish Cypriots, criticised for obstructing progress towards a settlement. This helped the 'non-rejectionist' camp to attract new support from the political centre. George Vassiliou, a businessman not associated with past political failures, ran an impressive campaign as an independent candidate in the 1988 presidential elections (with AKEL's backing), offering a fresh approach to the national question. In the first round, in February 1988, he and Clerides both defeated Kyprianou, eliminating him from the final ballot. A week later, Vassiliou narrowly won the decisive poll.¹³

Vassiliou's election marked the victory of the 'non-rejectionist' approach which had been in a clear majority since the failure of the high-level meeting in January 1985. From the outset he made it clear that his candidature and presidency were principally aimed at resolving the national question, that he was not overly concerned about re-election, and that he could therefore promote initiatives that more conventional politicians might find difficult. He began his administration with a degree of support from the two main Greek-Cypriot political parties that the outgoing president had never mustered.

Intercommunal talks, 1988-89

Vassiliou's offer to talk without preconditions gave Pérez de Cuéllar an

The Greek-Cypriot political crisis is described by K Watkins, 'Greek Cypriot political crisis and elections', *Friends of Cyprus Report* 28, 1986, pp 12-16.

Voting figures were DISY 33.6 per cent (up 1.7 per cent on 1981) and nineteen seats; DIKO 27.7 per cent (up 8.2 per cent) and sixteen seats; AKEL 27.4 per cent (down 5.4 per cent) with fifteen seats; and EDEK 11.0 per cent (up 2.9 per cent) and six seats. DIKO's gain included votes regained from three centrist splinter parties which had been set up before the 1981 election, but did not contest that in 1985.

Voting in the first round was: Glafcos Clerides (DISY) 33.2 per cent, Georgios Vassiliou (independent) 30.11 per cent, Sypros Kyprianou (DIKO) 27.29 per cent and Vassos Lyssarides (EDEK) 9.22 per cent; in the second round Vassiliou took 51.63 per cent to Clerides' 48.37 per cent.

opportunity to revive intercommunal negotiation. He invited the new president and Denktaş to discussions in Geneva on 24 August 1988, and emerged with an agreement for frequent meetings between them, aimed at a negotiated settlement of 'all aspects' of the Cyprus problem by 1 June 1989. They also agreed to review progress with the Secretary-General before the end of 1988.¹⁴

This fourth initiative was greeted with more optimism than Pérez de Cuéllar's earlier efforts. Partly, this was due to international developments—the success surrounding UN initiatives in the Gulf and elsewhere, and the new *rapprochement* between Greece and Turkey—but there were also reasons internal to Cyprus. Vassiliou was the first interlocutor not directly involved in the island's earlier intercommunal conflicts. He had declared himself willing to discuss new ideas, opening up the possibility of new concessions on both sides. He was rightly thought to be a far better match than Kyprianou for Denktaş's tough negotiating style.

Nevertheless, the talks failed to make significant progress in late 1988. Despite good personal relations and positive gestures by Vassiliou, he and Denktaş achieved little beyond reasserting established views on the main intercommunal differences. The first review meeting with Pérez de Cuéllar, held on 22–23 November 1988, was therefore widely expected to fail; but in the event it gave renewed impetus to the negotiations. Denktaş arrived direct from discussions with the Turkish government to announce what he called a new initiative—minor proposals on the freedom of settlement and property ownership within Cyprus, and on the long-term presence of Turkish troops. Although these were not formally discussed, Vassiliou and Denktaş agreed to continue their regular meetings by 'exploring . . . a wide range of options for each of the issues that make up the Cyprus problem and . . . evaluating them in the light of the interests and concerns of both sides'.¹⁵ The second round of talks began in December 1988 and a further review meeting was agreed for March 1989.

Issues in the intercommunal talks

The issues facing the negotiators have barely changed since 1974. The following pages identify the main points at issue, and examine some options available to break the deadlock.

¹⁴ Statement by the UN Secretary-General, 24 August 1988.

¹⁵ Statement by the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, 23 November 1988.

Constitutional structure

At the heart of the discussion lie different conceptions of the Cypriot state. The Turkish-Cypriot case is based on their view that the Republic of Cyprus was established by the 1960 Constitution as an equal partnership of the two communities. It therefore dissolved when the constitutional settlement broke down in 1963: the Greek-Cypriot administration which remained should not be internationally recognised as the Cyprus government, and should recognise the equal status of the TRNC as a precondition for re-establishing a Cypriot state. That state must be a confederation of two equal regions, one Greek-Cypriot and one Turkish-Cypriot, in which central government powers are extremely limited and where individual citizens have no right to live or work in the region which is not their ethnic homeland.¹⁶

The Greek Cypriot view also encompasses bizonal federation, but is otherwise very different. Greek Cypriots regard the Turkish-Cypriot withdrawal from political institutions in 1963 as irrelevant to constitutional legitimacy, so that a settlement today would merely restore Turkish-Cypriot participation in the continuing Cypriot state. In the Greek-Cypriot view, the equality of individual citizens takes precedence over that of federal regions. They must, for example, have the right to live and work throughout the island, and central government must have sufficient overriding powers to guarantee the integrity of the state.

Essentially, Greek Cypriots see the Turkish-Cypriot case as a rationalisation of partition, while Turkish Cypriots fear their Greek compatriots aim to restore Greek-Cypriot domination throughout the land. Intercommunal talks have rarely tackled this fundamental contradiction, but have been preoccupied with ways of restructuring the power-sharing arrangements of 1960 in a form consistent with bizonal federation. The 1984–86 UN documents, for example, sought agreement on such detailed matters as the proportional share-out of cabinet posts and the use of national and regional flags.¹⁷ Other issues considered at length during intercommunal negotiations include the structure and ethnic proportionality of the federal legislature, the roles of federal and regional police, and the procedure for resolving intercommunal deadlock. While these *are* important matters and need to be discussed, they cannot substitute for consensus on the fundamental nature of the federation in which they operate.

The basic Turkish-Cypriot view was put most clearly in the 'Explanatory note of the Turkish-Cypriot proposals for the solution of the Cyprus problem', 1978, reprinted in N. M. Ertekin, *The Cyprus Dispute and the Birth of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*, pp. 321–33. 1986 'draft framework agreement', clauses 1 and 2.

of them welcomed the Turkish invasion in 1974, not just as a response to the immediate political crisis but as a long-term release from fear and insecurity. The Turkish forces remain with their overwhelming support. Greek Cypriots, by contrast, recall the invasion as a time when thousands of their compatriots died and many more fled into internal exile. Many fear that Turkey's real intention is the occupation of the entire island. Greek-Cypriot negotiators insist on the total withdrawal of Turkish troops and favour demilitarisation of the reconstituted state. In practice, no solution that fails to address these security fears in both communities can hope to succeed.

There are currently some 27,000 Turkish troops in Cyprus, far more than necessary to defend the 'green line'; they can be reinforced within hours from the Turkish mainland. A phased reduction in troop numbers would therefore have no practical effect on Turkey's ability to intervene in a crisis, but would have a dramatic impact on Greek-Cypriot perceptions of Turkey's commitment to a settlement. Yet by the end of 1988 there had been no sign of such a development. The most Denktas has proposed is an eventual reduction to a balance of Cypriot and 'non-Cypriot' (ie 'motherland') forces in both regions following the establishment of an interim federal government.²²

This dispute extends to the provision of international guarantees for any constitutional settlement. Denktas insists that Turkey should remain as a guarantor, even though in practice proximity to the Turkish mainland provides the most effective guarantee possible. Greek Cypriots cannot accept this, and would prefer independent guarantors—possibly organised through the UN—who could take action against Turkey itself if necessary.

Confidence-building measures

Greek and Turkish Cypriots have lived apart for almost twenty-five years. The traditional pattern of settlement, with Greek, Turkish and mixed villages intermingled across the island, broke down in the inter-communal violence of December 1963. Since 1974, there has been little contact across the 'green line' dividing the communities. This separation has led to a dramatic divergence in their economic fortunes. The booming Greek-Cypriot economy has a gross domestic product per head some three times that in the north of Cyprus, where Turkey provides two-thirds of government finance and business is hampered by international non-recognition. Younger Cypriots, meanwhile, now

²² In his proposals of November 1988.

know little of each others' culture, language or politics, and have little understanding of each other's fears and aspirations for the future.

Two kinds of confidence-building measures are proposed to resolve these problems: immediate steps to promote understanding in advance of a settlement, and transitional arrangements to assist subsequent social and economic reintegration.

Few initiatives to promote intercommunal understanding have so far taken place. Occasional conferences of Cypriot politicians and professionals have been held outside the island²³ and a few Turkish-Cypriot politicians have recently visited south Nicosia. Such events, though generally successful, are rare. The most important initiative to date is a joint sewerage scheme and municipal development plan for Nicosia sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP). This involves continuous cooperation between the city's two civic administrations, and has ensured that Nicosia could be readily reintegrated following a settlement of the national problem.²⁴ Vassiliou has strongly endorsed this initiative, but Denktaş is more equivocal; the council leader in Turkish Nicosia is, significantly, a prominent opposition figure.²⁵

These informal confidence-building measures lie outside the intercommunal talks, which in this context are concerned primarily with specific issues that might be resolved in advance of a comprehensive settlement. Greek Cypriots, for example, have long sought the early resettlement of Varosha, which would enable many refugees to return home, and provide opportunities for Greek-Cypriot business. Turkish Cypriots have sought reciprocal concessions, principally the lifting of the 'economic embargo' (restrictions imposed on Turkish-Cypriot trade and tourism through the Cyprus government's membership of international organisations) and the reopening of Nicosia airport as an entry-point to both parts of the island. Some reciprocal steps along these lines might be implemented during a phased normalisation, but it is unlikely that this could be achieved outside a comprehensive and timetabled settlement.

Beyond these specific problems, the interlocutors might seek to identify projects to promote social and economic cohesion along the lines pioneered by Nicosia's 'mayors'. The need for an economic development plan, focused on the Turkish-Cypriot region, is already recognised

²³ See, for example, 'Report on "Friends of Cyprus" intercommunal conference, London, 1st-6th December 1986', *Friends of Cyprus Report* 29, 1987, pp 3-6.

²⁴ Little has been written about this initiative, but for a brief account see D Souter, 'Civil co-operation unites divided city', *Local Government Chronicle* (London), 7 October 1988.

²⁵ Mustafa Akıncı, leader of the Communal Liberation Party.

and should provide scope for Cypriot capital as well as international aid. Joint medical and social security provision obviously make sense in a small island with limited resources. An intercommunal university has also been proposed by President Vassiliou's government. The prospect of measures such as these could significantly increase public interest in an overall settlement.

Prospects for the future

The two community leaders were due to review their 'evaluation of options' on these issues with Pérez de Cuéllar in March 1989. At the time of writing (December 1988), it was impossible to predict whether they will have made significant progress or remained deadlocked on key subjects. Few Greek Cypriots, at least, expected an early breakthrough from this second round of talks.

How long the process could be sustained without significant results is also unclear. Certainly in the Greek-Cypriot community Vassiliou retains majority support, including that of both main parties, for his approach, and made a point of discussing his strategy for the second round with the National Council of party leaders. There are signs of problems ahead for him, however. Leaders of the 'rejectionist' parties, including Kyprianou, refused to accompany him to the New York review meeting in November 1988; and a 'rejectionist' demonstration that month briefly brought Greek-Cypriot students face to face with Turkish-Cypriot soldiers. Any more such incidents (roundly condemned by Vassiliou) could jeopardise future negotiations, no matter how large the majority behind the president.

On the Turkish-Cypriot side, there has been no political change commensurate with that in the south. Since the 1950s Denktaş has sought to secure ever greater Turkish-Cypriot autonomy. While he retains the full support of the Turkish government (which has no alternative candidate for the Turkish-Cypriot leadership) he has little incentive to relinquish any of the independence he has secured. He is unlikely, therefore, to offer concessions acceptable to the Greek-Cypriot leadership without a change of policy on the Turkish mainland.

This is not to say that Turkish-Cypriot opinion is undivided. Denktaş won his last 'presidential' election in 1985 easily enough, but he did so largely through his personal authority. His majority in the Turkish-Cypriot assembly depends on the support of Turkish settlers' representatives. Left-wing opposition parties won twenty-two of the fifty

assembly seats in the 1985 elections. Their leaders, Özker Özgür and Mustafa Akıncı, are enthusiastic advocates of intercommunal dialogue and support the eventual reintegration of the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities.²⁶ While they have no immediate prospect of displacing Denktaş, the growth of support for them must be a factor in Ankara's long-term calculations.

The international dimension

Those calculations are important. One major difference between the latest Cyprus initiative and successful UN involvement elsewhere is that one of the leading military and political actors is not directly involved in negotiations. No agreement can be reached without Turkey's military presence being addressed, yet the intercommunal talks provide no forum to discuss this with the Turkish government. Wider UN diplomacy may be needed, or even the international conference advocated by President Vassiliou.

Successive Greek-Cypriot governments have sought to bring international (and particularly US) pressure on the Turkish government to withdraw from Cyprus, and for a time in the 1970s secured an embargo on US arms sales. This has consistently failed to achieve results. Today, however, there are more positive reasons why at least partial withdrawal may prove attractive to decision makers in Ankara.

One is Turkey's recent *rapprochement* with Greece. After years of hostility, the Greek and Turkish prime ministers established a new dialogue in Davos, Switzerland, in January 1988. Despite recent setbacks, this Graeco-Turkish *détente* has opened up new possibilities—for the settlement of airspace and sovereignty disputes in the Aegean, for the long-term reduction of military and political tension in Thrace, and for Greek acceptance of Turkey's application to join the European Community (EC). The Turkish government may well consider such advances to be worth the price of a settlement in Cyprus, provided that the long-term security of the Turkish Cypriots was guaranteed.

Turkey's application for membership of the EC, formally submitted in April 1987, could also induce a change in Turkish policy. Greek-Cypriot officials argue that withdrawal from Cyprus should be a pre-

²⁶ Voting figures in the 'presidential' election were: Rauf Denktaş 70.5 per cent, Özgür (Republican Turkish Party) 18.4 per cent, Durduran (Communal Liberation Party) 9.2 per cent; assembly elections: National Unity Party (pro-Denktaş) 36.0 per cent and twenty-four seats, Republican Turkish Party 21.0 per cent and twelve seats, Communal Liberation Party 16.0 per cent and ten seats, New Birth Party (principally representing Turkish settlers) 8.7 per cent and four seats. No other parties secured representation.

condition for Turkish entry. In reality, EC member-states have many other reasons to resist Turkey's application, not least the difficulty of integrating an economy so relatively underdeveloped into Western Europe's trade and migration systems. Turkey's application is therefore likely to be deferred for reasons other than Turkey's presence in Cyprus. It remains the case, however, that progress towards Turkish membership would require major changes in policy regarding Cyprus, particularly if the island's own application were processed simultaneously with that from Ankara. It would be incompatible with EC membership for a member-state to maintain hostile forces in another's territory. It would also be impossible to sustain any future restrictions on the movement of capital and labour within Cyprus which would be inadmissible between member-states. For these reasons, progress towards Turkish membership of the EC may assist a settlement more than any delay caused by the continuing stalemate on the island.

Long-term prospects

If a settlement is reached, either through the present talks or any subsequent initiative, it is unlikely to spell the end of UN involvement in Cyprus. In the short term, UN peacekeeping forces would almost certainly remain to monitor new security arrangements including whatever agreement is reached about military withdrawal. UNDP could well extend its Nicosia experience to Famagusta, the other city divided by the 'green line'. Resettlement and compensation arrangements for refugees and displaced persons would need supervision, which again could probably be most effectively organised by the UN.

Nor is an agreement certain to remove Cyprus from the UN's long-term agenda. The key problem with the 1960 Constitution was that it sought to reconcile the communities to united independence by entrenching communal rights and privileges in such a way that every political issue became a matter of ethnic competition. When a major dispute arose, in December 1963, there was little cohesion remaining in the elaborate institutions devised to keep the two communities together.

Most constitutional discussion in the intercommunal talks since the 1960s has been concerned with finding mutually acceptable reformulations of the same communal rights and privileges that proved ineffective (and in practice divisive) between 1960 and 1963; for example the strict division of powers between the Greek-Cypriot president and the Turkish-Cypriot vice-president, the proportions of Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the island's representative assembly, the extent of the

Turkish-Cypriot veto. The constitutional challenge for today's interlocutors is to place these necessary constitutional safeguards in a context that will encourage cooperation rather than competition between the communities; in which it becomes normal, for example, for Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot parties with similar ideologies to cooperate with one another on important policy issues.

This constitutional problem is much more difficult to resolve than the redistribution of territory or the re-establishment of freedoms of movement, settlement and property ownership (constraints which would be unlikely to survive the attraction of Turkish-Cypriot labour and Greek-Cypriot capital across the intercommunal border). Unless more attention is paid by the interlocutors to confidence-building measures and unifying elements within the Constitution before a settlement, however, the danger is that any agreement they reach will be just as vulnerable to early crisis as the 1960 Constitution. Cyprus could not afford another failure like that. Whatever the outcome of the present negotiations, Pérez de Cuéllar's Cyprus problem will be with him for some time to come.

Democratic consolidation in the Southern Cone and Brazil: beyond political disarticulation?*

The debate over democratisation which has absorbed Latin Americanists for the past decade has shifted from transition mechanisms and manoeuvres towards questions of democratic survival.¹ Those transitions were accompanied by renewed concern for democracy as a value among many in Latin America, especially intellectuals of the Left, where, in the 1960s and early 1970s, socialism and revolution were often more dominant goals.² But in most, if not all of the countries which have recently undergone transitions from authoritarian rule, the structural problems which brought democracy into crisis have yet to be resolved.

This article attempts to sketch some answers to the question of whether democracy is being consolidated in three countries which appeared to complete transition between 1983 and 1985. All three are, for one reason or another, crucial cases for the future of Latin American democracy: Argentina and Brazil, quite simply because of their size, and Uruguay, because of its previous character as a democratic 'role model' for Latin America.

By democracy, the article refers to procedural democracy without any particular social content. However, it focuses on nations where the rights of liberty and participation do not remain formal as opposed to substantive in effect. This is because these societies are relatively de-

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¹ On transitions see G O'Donnell, P Schmitter and L Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Regimes*, Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, and C Gillespie, 'From authoritarian crises to democratic transitions', *Latin American Research Review*, 22(3) 1987, pp 165–84.

² On what Italians would call the *aggiornamenti* of the Left, see R Barros, 'The Left and democracy: recent debates in Latin America', *Telos* 68 (summer) 1986, pp 49–70. An excellent essay in this revisionist tradition is T Moulián, 'Crítica a la crítica marxista de las democracias burguesas', in *América Latina 80: Democracia y Movimiento Popular*, Lima: DESCO, 1981.

veloped, educated, urban, and not so unequal as to vitiate democratic guarantees.³

Assessing progress towards democratic consolidation

The first thing to take note of regarding democratic consolidation is that, if successful, the process contains two problems with different logics: the question of democracy and the problem of political stability. This duality underlies every facet of the attempt to assess a nation's progress toward consolidating democracy. Without attempting a formal definition of the criteria for measuring consolidation, I shall simply say that stable democracies are characterised by their ability to process conflicts successfully. This analysis therefore focuses on three crucial axes of political conflict: civil-military relations; government-opposition relations; and relations between the state, labour and capital.

These axes of conflict define three clusters of highly-charged political issues which have been the source of bitterly painful debate. Take first civil-military relations. None of these countries made the transition to democracy on the basis of popular insurrection. The problem is therefore, quite simply, how to re-establish civilian supremacy over the armed forces, given the latter's monopoly over the means of violent coercion.⁴ Is active governmental intervention in all levels of military affairs the best recipe, or rather a 'hands-off' approach? Underlying the calculus of expediency lie immensely difficult ethical dilemmas regarding the military's past crimes of torture and 'disappearance'. Relations between governments and oppositions are also central to the problem of democratic consolidation. Should presidents often elected by pluralities or even slender majorities attempt to rule by exercising strongly centralised authority on the basis of their alleged mandate? Or should they instead engage in frequent consultation with opposition parties, seeking consensus over all major policy changes?⁵ These problems are closely related to the question of how and whether party

³ Even in the case of Brazil, one of the most extreme of unequal societies in Latin America, it is a premiss of this article that democracy as a formal practice has relevance to the mass of the population and the potential to empower the people to affect their lives substantively for the better.

⁴ On the general problem of civilian control of the military, see C Welch (ed), *Civilian Control of the Military*, Buffalo, New York: SUNY Press, 1976.

⁵ Past practices regarding executive-legislative relations have been unstable and highly controversial. See C Gillespie, 'Presidential-parliamentary relations and the problem of democratic stability', presented to the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 1987; and T Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

systems can be established which further loyal opposition and responsible government. Finally, relations between the government and the associations of business and labour unions form another raft of intractable issues. New governments face the contradictory demands of trying to define a model of development which answers to democratic calls for income redistribution, while satisfying private businessmen and foreign creditors. The results of failed attempts to square this circle have been high inflation, strikes, speculation, and refusal to invest on the part of entrepreneurs.⁶

The praetorian model

The chances for democratic consolidation have often been linked either explicitly or implicitly to the overcoming of what Samuel Huntington named 'praetorianism'. He defined praetorianism as a situation of disorderly political mobilisation that overflows institutional channels: 'each group employs means which reflect its peculiar nature and capabilities: the wealthy bribe; students riot; workers strike; mobs demonstrate; and the military coup.'⁷ Praetorianism, therefore, is more than just military intervention in politics, constituting as it does a much broader syndrome of direct action by different components of state and society which paralyse and bypass representative institutions of the polity.

It is not hard to see how this syndrome echoes the three axes of political conflict which I have mapped out. A situation of praetorianism arises when the government is unable to establish stable relations with the military, with powerful social and economic interests, and with the political opposition. Praetorian politics are the characteristically unmediated politics of elite *putsch* and mass mobilisation as groups seek to maximise their autonomy and defend their share of resources. Institutions for orderly representation and bargaining become marginalised, and politics spill out of institutional arenas into the streets. Parties, legislatures and bureaucracies become minor actors in a political game they no longer control. Cooperative strategies for the resolution of conflict break down as laws are flouted and elections overturned. Politics become brutal and almost Hobbesian.

⁶ The issues are not just substantive (for example, whether or not to raise bus fares, which frequently produces rioting) but also procedural. To what extent should the government consult with interest groups? This is a dilemma of liberal democratic theory which has never been resolved even in the stablest democracies.

⁷ S Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1968, p 196.

This all too familiar pattern in the breakdown of democracy in Latin America's most developed nations during the 1960s and 1970s may be seen as a form of Prisoner's Dilemma. Overcoming it is crucial for democratic consolidation. Yet Huntington's own work tells us only a little about the potential 'cures' for praetorianism, beyond the call for greater institutionalisation. In his early work he put a great deal of faith in strong parties as the most likely route to the creation of strong civil institutions.⁸ His subsequent work on the crises of democracy in the developed world emphasised the need to 'insulate' decision-makers, dampen participation and reduce 'overload' on governments.⁹

As long as thinking remains trapped in the praetorian logic, there is a danger that pessimistic conclusions may be drawn which become self-fulfilling prophecies. The only visible solution to disorder may appear to be brute coercion or 'foundational' authoritarian regimes which seek to impose strong institutions for an eventual return to democracy. The result could be an endless cycle of repression and protest. To break out from the Prisoner's Dilemma of praetorianism and reaction seems to require a three-stage process:

1. satisfaction of the minimum terms on which social actors will respect polyarchic rules—a first stage based on rational group interests;¹⁰
2. strengthening of the institutions and organisation of the polity to ensure respect for their authority and the expressed interests of the collective society—a second stage based particularly on consolidation of political parties and legislatures;¹¹
3. eventual establishment of the continuing legitimacy of democracy as transcending particular interests at any given moment—a third stage in which democratic values become internalised and diffused.¹²

The importance of the second stage is that it both removes 'temptations' toward praetorian mobilisations and weakens their potential

⁸ *Ibid.*, chapter 7.

⁹ M Crozier *et al* (eds), *The Crisis of Democracy*, New York: New York University Press, 1975, chapter 3.

¹⁰ For an attempt to specify a formal model of consent to class domination under capitalist democracy, see: A Przeworski, 'Some problems in the study of the transition to democracy', in G O'Donnell *et al* (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: comparative perspectives*, Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

¹¹ H Sábato and M Cavarozzi (eds), *Democracia, orden político y parlamento fuerte*, Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984.

¹² In this sense one may define a regime as 'legitimate' when individuals and groups respect its laws and policies even when they contradict immediate self-interest.

danger.¹³ Once the final phase is complete, legitimacy ensures a commitment to democracy, even an unthinking allegiance, which is necessary for democratic regimes to survive the periodic crises they inevitably encounter. This espousal of democracy as a value in itself, rather than a convenient instrument to be adopted and discarded at will, emerges only after a long-term process.

The remainder of this article concentrates on evidence regarding the first two stages. It looks first at the major social and political actors in terms of their immediate interests, before turning to the attempted institutionalisation of their relations, and the obstacles which each country faces.

The present interests of capital, labour and the military

A major factor in the military withdrawal from power in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina was the loss of support from economic elites.¹⁴ Subsequent evidence suggests that transitions have *not* harmed bourgeois influence over policy-making; and may have increased it.¹⁵ Those who believe that liberal democratic institutions, if they are to survive, must not interfere with the fundamentals of capitalism will note that the founding democratic governments of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay made no attempts at nationalisation, or indeed any fundamental reforms of their political economy. In fact, these governments even began cautiously to revive the stalled privatisation efforts of previous military regimes. None of these three new democracies elected a leftist government – though Alfonsín successfully appealed to the young left-wing vote in Argentina in 1983 and populist-reformist pressure originally was strong in Brazil. In practice the Alfonsín administration has been moderate, while in Brazil reform proposals have been completely frustrated by a combination of President Sarney's appoint-

¹⁴ The concept of 'temptations' was suggested to me by Evelyn Huber Stephens. Such temptations cannot, however, be permanently abolished. What matters is that in a stable democracy shows of force by particular social interests be widely seen as less legitimate than the collective decisions of representative institutions.

¹⁵ The contrast with Chile, where military rule survives, is illuminating in this regard.

¹⁶ In Argentina, agricultural and industrial business associations retained a great deal of influence over the Alfonsín administration. See, for example, 'Associations gang up on Sourrouille', *Latin American Weekly Report* 87-29, 30 July 1987, p. 8. Their protests previously hampered government efforts to promote economic integration with Uruguay and Brazil by means of tariff reductions. In Uruguay, government-business relations remained cordial under the Colorados. In Brazil, successive economic crises produced confrontations between the government and various sectors, usually (as in Argentina) over the issue of price controls to defeat inflation. However, business associations coordinated their protests and even created a joint body to monitor economic policy.

ment of former pro-military politicians, the efforts of the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro/the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB) to restrain popular demands, and the covert pressure of the military.

Urban labour and the popular sectors played a major role in protests against military rule in Argentina, Brazil and, to some extent, Uruguay. Wage compression was staggering under all three military authoritarian regimes, as unions were subject to relentless repression. (However, in Brazil the growth of the new unionism, notably among the São Paulo metalworkers, permitted some fluctuating wage improvements in the decade after 1975.) It was therefore inevitable that there would be strike activity and attempted 'catching up' with regard to eroded living standards under the new democracies. Union strength had been hurt by past repression and deindustrialisation—especially in Uruguay and Argentina. Only Brazil's unions had already increased in size and strength *vis-à-vis* employers, as well as autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state, due to the country's continued rapid industrial growth under the military. In all cases, democratic liberties have made possible a rapid reorganisation and extension of union activities.¹⁶ In advanced industrial democracies it has long been known that union strength and unity are associated with declining strike rates, particularly when centralised labour federations are able to forge an effective alliance with a governing party.¹⁷

The military have managed to protect their core interests in most respects, particularly in Brazil, though former Junta members were put on trial and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in Argentina. However, even there they have successfully blocked mass trials. There is some evidence that the armed forces are becoming more professionally oriented to external (as opposed to domestic) security threats, though this clashes with politicians' aims of redirecting state spending from defence and security to social programmes and development.¹⁸ How-

¹⁶ Rural labour is also better organised now in Brazil, where there is a large peasant population, though still subject to repression at the hands of large land-owners. The demand for land reform in Brazil constitutes a potentially destabilising political problem not faced by Argentina or Uruguay.

¹⁷ See W Korpi and M Shalev, 'Strikes, power and politics in the Western nations, 1900-1976', in M Zeitlin, *Political Power and Social Theory* (1), Greenwich, Connecticut: Jai Press, 1979; D Cameron, 'Social democracy, corporatism, labor quiescence and the representation of economic interest in advanced capitalist society', in J Goldthorpe (ed), *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

¹⁸ For a discussion of how Latin American governments have sometimes raised military spending in order not to antagonise the armed forces, see B Ames, *Political Survival*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987.

ever, there are no active left-wing guerrilla movements in Argentina, Brazil, or Uruguay.¹⁹

Are democratic institutions and processes becoming strengthened?

It is all very well to point to current factors which either weaken the potential praetorian opponents of the government, or cause their interests to coincide conjuncturally, but such trends can be reversed. What Robert Dahl calls a 'system of mutual guarantees',²⁰ or ingrained democratic practices, norms and institutions may take generations to emerge as cooperation proves successful and trust and interdependence accumulate.²¹ The need therefore arises to look at mechanisms for regulating conflict along the three axes already sketched. If past relations have left a legacy of mistrust and suspicion among political actors, one solution for breaking out of the vicious circle can be pacts.²² These were very important in both the Colombian and Venezuelan transitions to democracy, and later also in Spain.²³

Three potential types of pact can be envisaged: pacts between parties and the military; between parties and interest groups; and among parties themselves. The pacts between parties and the military might be called *concessionary*, based as they are on trading-off interests. Pacts between parties and interest groups are often known as *corporatist*. Pacts among parties correspond to what Lijphart terms *consociational* mechanisms.²⁴ During the transitions much was made of the need for such pacts, but little was achieved. However, analysis of the different experiences of countries must also include attention to more informal patterns of mutual cooperation which may be emerging.

¹⁹ The terrorism that Argentina has seen has come from the Right. Equally significant is the new strategy of Uruguay's Tupamaros: namely, grass-roots organisation of the dwellers in Montevideo's slums and shanty towns.

²⁰ R Dahl, *Polyarchy*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1971.

²¹ In this respect Uruguay, with its far longer democratic traditions, is better placed than its neighbours.

²² See P Schmitter, 'Patti e transizioni: mezzi non-democratici a fini democratici?' in *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 14(3), December 1984, pp 363-82; S Ellner, 'Inter-party agreement and rivalry in Venezuela', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 19(4), winter 1984-5; R Dix, 'Consociational democracy in Colombia', *Comparative Politics*, 12(3), April 1980, pp 303-21.

²³ On the Spanish case see R López-Pintor, 'Mass and elite perspectives in the process of transition to democracy', in E Baloyra (ed), *Comparing New Democracies*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987.

²⁴ A Lijphart, 'Consociational democracy', *World Politics* 21(2), January 1969.

Civil-military pacts: the importance of convergent interests

The two major factors in the restoration of civilian control are historic patterns of military subordination, and inter- and intra-service rivalries. Where these are missing, however, pacts may be a temporary solution. Uruguay's transition was based on the most formal and explicit of such concessions, the Naval Club Pact which was agreed upon in early August 1984.²⁵ Soft-line generals led by the Army Commander, General Medina, saw it to be in their interests to negotiate a deal with the moderate opposition regarding the terms for elections. This led to a transitional period of a year in which civilian control was not fully re-established over military promotions. However, one of the issues which was scrupulously ignored at the Naval Club was the question of whether there would be trials for those military officers accused of human rights violations.

On the eve of the first scheduled trial, the two major parties—the Colorados and Blancos—at last agreed on a formula to end legal proceedings.²⁶ To all intents and purposes this coda to the Naval Club Pact had resolved the last major bone of contention between the military and the politicians.²⁷ Shortly afterwards, General Medina retired as Army Commander, and a year later he joined the Cabinet as Minister of Defence. Military meddling in politics has since been very slight by regional standards. In sum, by means of a partially negotiated formal agreement and a subsequent commitment to avoid showdowns, Uruguay seemed then to have made a fairly successful start towards the institutionalisation of civilian control.

However, the controversy over the military amnesty refused to die down. The left and sectors of the Blanco Party immediately launched a campaign to force a popular referendum on the law. After a Herculean effort, the 'Pro-Referendum Campaign' delivered what they claimed were the necessary signatures to the Electoral Court, which spent most of 1988 painstakingly checking the validity of each one amidst acrimonious accusations of foot-dragging.²⁸ Nevertheless it seems unlikely that, if the referendum is ever held, a majority of voters would vote to repeal the

²⁵ See C Gillespie, 'Party strategies and redemocratisation'.

²⁶ The so-called 'Ley de Caducidad' in actual fact specified a sort of abrupt ad hoc statute of limitations regarding crimes by the armed forces during their period of rule.

²⁷ In justifying his decision to support an effective amnesty for the military, the leader of the Blancos, Wilson Ferreira, argued that his decision was inescapable given the negotiated model of transition that Uruguay had experienced—a model he himself had resolutely opposed.

²⁸ 'Crece las controversias por el control de firmas', *Búsqueda* 457, 27 October-2 November 1988.

law. The government was anxious to avoid a vote, if only because of fear of potential repercussions and reluctance to renew an unpopular stance.²⁹

The picture in Argentina regarding civil-military relations is a much less positive one. Argentina's transition to democracy was based on the near collapse of the military regime in the wake of the Falklands/Malvinas war, and a disorderly retreat to the barracks.³⁰ The generals proclaimed their own military amnesty as a parting gesture, but this was immediately annulled by Alfonsín upon coming to power. Paradoxically, although the Argentine military has a far longer history of insubordination and repeated seizure of power, it was so discredited and disorganised by the *débâcle* of its own rule that it was possible for the civilian government to put the members of the three post-1976 Juntas on trial after the military courts refused to do so in 1985. Civil-military relations in Argentina both during and after the transition were thus characterised by extreme hostility, with almost no perceived common interests and a frankly triumphalist and vengeful attitude on the part of many politicians. The scale of past human rights abuses was much higher, too, in Argentina than in Uruguay: over 10,000 citizens had disappeared during the so-called 'dirty war' against terrorism in the mid-1970s.

As long as only the hated former leaders who had brought economic ruin and military humiliation upon Argentina were standing trial, civilian authorities had little difficulty in maintaining control. However, when the problem arose of civil suits against lesser officers, the armed forces started to emerge from their previous state of shock and began to resist, led especially by the middle-ranking officers. The entire structure of hierarchical authority and command in the armed forces began to be eroded, and a rash of mutinies began. Eventually, the Argentine Congress approved a bill establishing the principle of *obediencia debida* or due obedience. By this law, no member of the armed forces below the rank of lieutenant-colonel can be tried for any action undertaken in deference to orders from his superiors.³¹

²⁹ M Arregui and C Gillespie, 'Uruguay', in *Latin American and Caribbean Contemporary Record*, 6, 1986-7. Just before Christmas 1988, the Electoral Court announced that the requisite number of signatures had been verified to force a plebiscite on the military's amnesty. The referendum has been announced for April 1989.

³⁰ See A Fontana, *Fuerzas Armadas, Partidos Políticos y Transición a la Democracia en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad, 1984.

³¹ See *Latin American Weekly Report* 87-01; application of the law led to the dropping of charges against almost 400 officers, and the pursuit of cases against about forty. *Latin American Weekly Report* 87-29, 30 July 1987, p 6. I should like to thank Maria Moyano for explaining the intricacies of this situation to me.

What proved to be a favourable factor in the transition as far as the re-establishment of civilian control was concerned—the existence of severe intra- and inter-service rivalries—also has grave disadvantages in the form of constant jockeying for power among rival factions of the armed forces. This makes it much harder for generals to compromise with civilians, for fear of losing the support of their own subordinates. The halting attempts at resolution of the crisis in civil-military relations has left a much less favourable legacy—not least because it was accompanied by open mutinies such as those of Easter 1987 and December 1988. These major rebellions and other smaller incidents were only dealt with at the cost of weakening the government's credibility.

Above all, historical legacies and the difference in the modes of democratic transition go a long way to explaining the much lower institutionalisation of civilian control in Argentina than across the River Plate. A sizeable bloc of the Uruguayan armed forces in support of General Medina became convinced in 1984 that a return to civilian rule was in the military's best interests. Once they had entered into a pact with the moderate parties, these military leaders had an interest in seeing that the new democracy should prove a success. In Argentina, the situation is sadly the reverse: each new problem encountered by the democratic government is a cause for gloating and a stimulus to plotting among Argentina's far more numerous authoritarian cabals.

Civil-military relations in Brazil have also been quite different from the Uruguayan pattern of reluctant but rather successful dealing. The Brazilian armed forces have quite simply retained a far greater degree of political influence and governmental oversight than in the other two cases.³² This is mainly a function of the way Brazil's return to democracy was largely initiated and controlled by the military government 'from above'. Moderate opposition politicians went out of their way constantly to reassure the military that their core interests would be respected under the new democracy. The armed forces still control the three cabinet defence portfolios and the National Security Council, which considers all major pieces of legislation.³³

The new civilian authorities have increased spending on the armed

³² See A Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp 103–14.

³³ The issue of human rights was largely laid to rest in Brazil six years before the inauguration of the civilian administration of President Sarney, when the military regime enacted a reciprocal amnesty for both guerrillas and military. See T Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil 1964–85*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp 217–19. A few trials for the most publicised human rights violations even went ahead under the military regime.

forces. If the Brazilian military are discontented it is because they are critical of President Sarney's failure to overcome the country's worsening political and economic crisis. Nevertheless, it is widely believed that their behind-the-scenes threats to the Constituent Assembly ensured the prolongation of President Sarney's mandate for a further year and blocked the move to introduce a parliamentary system of government.³⁴ Politicians in Brazil remain much more deferential to the generals than in Uruguay or Argentina. In short, the military remains a power behind the throne, as it has been since 1930.³⁵

Corporatist pacts: the value of strong peak associations and party links

During the Spanish transition to democracy the so-called Moncloa Pacts were a major source of stability in relations between political parties, business and labour during a period of what might otherwise have been uncontrollable inflation and union militancy. Such pacts, which fused neo-corporatist and consociational elements, were often called for by politicians during the Argentine, Uruguayan and Brazilian transitions, usually under the rubric of *concertación* or concerted action.³⁶ In fact, very little of substance was achieved, though one might argue that the prolonged discussions between union leaders, employers and politicians often lowered the tension of the climate and bought a certain amount of time. These are the grounds for seeing the 1984 CONAPRO talks in Uruguay between parties, business and labour as a success.³⁷

The reasons for the ultimate failure of all attempts to make such 'social pacts' were essentially twofold: in the first place the relative weakness of peak associations; and in the second place the fact that governing parties did not have organisational links with the labour movement.

³⁴ *Lann American Regional Reports: Brazil*, 28 April 1988. A minister close to the President was reported to have commented about the President's tactic of using the military to put pressure on the Constituent Assembly: 'Sarney will get either five years or four stars'. The battle over the presidential term in the new Constitution and whether it would apply to Sarney can be followed in: 'Diretas à vista', *Istoé*, 11 November 1987; 'Sarney volta a respirar os cinco anos', *Istoé*, 20 January 1988; 'A briga pelo regime', *Veja*, 16 March 1988; and 'Marimbondo de Fogo', *Veja*, 23 March 1988.

³⁵ P Flynn, *Brazil. A Political Analysis*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978.

³⁶ N Lechner, 'Pacto social nos processos de democratização: a experiência Latino-Americana', in *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, 13, October 1985.

³⁷ P Mieres, 'Concertación en Uruguay: expectativas elevadas y consensos escasos', *Cuadernos del CLAEH*, 36, 1985, pp 29-44.

In Uruguay almost all labour unions are allied to the leftist parties, but these only account for about one-fifth of the vote in elections.³⁸ The governing Colorado Party is not a reactionary party, but it is certainly not a supporter of organised labour either. Several times it has suspended collective bargaining and decreed across the board wage rises below the rate of inflation. This is statist rather than corporatist behaviour, and has predictably led to several general strikes.³⁹

In Argentina, the Alfonsín administration began with ambitious plans to democratise the Peronist dominated labour unions by imposing secret-ballots for leadership elections. These proposals were defeated in the Senate where the Peronists retained a slight majority. Argentina was repeatedly paralysed by even more serious strikes than experienced in Uruguay. Soon it entered a spiral of triple digit inflation as unions sought to win back their former living standards; the spiral was only brought to a temporary stand-still by the 1985 Austral currency reform. This package, designed to impress foreign banks and the International Monetary Fund, was initially rather successful, but it came under mounting attack from labour as it led to the erosion of the income gains which unions had won in the wake of the collapse of military rule.

After less than two years, the belated attempt to defeat inflation in an even more technocratic manner than in Uruguay collapsed, and Argentina was soon menaced once more by hyperinflation. With important mid-term elections looming, the government tried to appease the unions by appointing a Peronist Minister of Labour, and negotiating a Social Pact with moderate Peronist unions in March 1987.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the Peronists made dramatic gains in the September elections, even though real wages had been allowed to rise again.⁴¹ When the Alfonsín government announced a new anti-inflation plan in August 1988 known as the 'Plan Primavera' (Spring Plan) the unions retaliated by declaring a general strike. This led to a day of rioting and looting on 9 September 1988 known as 'Black Friday') which was met with brutal police repression. Public opinion polls suggested, however, that the unions had made themselves so unpopular that this might rebound against the Peronists.

³⁸ See M Gargiulo, 'El desafío de la democracia: la izquierda política y sindical en el Uruguay post-autoritario', *Cuadernos del CLAEH* 38 (2), 1986, pp 17-45.

³⁹ Nevertheless, Uruguay's inflation fell steadily in the first three years after the return to democracy. It began to rise again in 1988, but remained far below the devastating levels reached in Argentina and Brazil. Uruguay also made a relatively successful effort to keep up interest payments on its foreign debt.

⁴⁰ *Latin American Weekly Report* 87-14, 9 April 1987, p 4.

⁴¹ A wage-price freeze was imposed in October. See *Latin American Regional Reports: Southern Cone*, 87-08, 15 October 1987.

The perennial problem with reaching a social pact in Argentina is not just the objective scarcity of resources to be distributed in order to buy compliance and coopt labour bosses, but the extremely unstable and competitive internal situation of politics within the Peronist unions.⁴² The difficulties of negotiating with labour in Argentina and Uruguay were greatly increased by the actions of the previous military regimes, with their systematic repression and even murder of established labour leaders. One result of this process was the emergence of a new generation of radical union leaders who had no experience of negotiating their demands. Labour unions in all three countries are also divided into different political tendencies, corresponding to orthodox and renewal wings.⁴³ Political splits can weaken labour, but they also weaken union leaders seeking to enter into pacts with government or employers, as they are constantly in danger of being outflanked by radicals. Hence they lead to radicalisation.

The weakness of peak labour associations was particularly marked in Brazil, and led to the repeated failure of the government's attempts to negotiate a viable social pact.⁴⁴ The growth and organisation of independent unions and parties representing the newly-important urban popular classes during the last phase of military rule was by no means completed by the time of the calling of the Constituent Assembly; the situation was still very fluid. The unions became the locus of a bitter struggle between the advocates of participation and autonomy, and rivals who were increasingly forced to copy their demands.

⁴² Apart from the moderate group of 'fifteen' headed by the Labour Minister, Carlos Alderete, and the orthodox faction of the CGT, known as 'sixty-two', headed by Lorenzo Miguel (the CGT Secretary-General, Saúl Ubaldini, also headed his own faction), there exists Eleuterio Cardozo's renewal wing, 'twenty-five', which favours democratisation of Peronism. These factions were polarised into two camps by the party primary in July 1988, which was won by the candidate of the right, Carlos Menem.

⁴³ In Uruguay the split pits communists against a bilateral alliance of extreme leftists, socialists and social democrats for control of the national labour federation, the PIT-CNT. In Brazil the PMDB, communists, and even pro-AIFLD union leaders formalised the CONCLAT federation in response to the setting up of the CUT by the more radical and grass-roots sectors, which were more oriented to the Workers' Party. They did this by reorganising as the CUT and, in order to compete with the CGT, became more militant in the process. See M. Keck, 'The new unionism in the Brazilian transition', in A. Stepan (ed.), *Redemocratising Brazil*, New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming. A Spanish version appeared in *Estudios Sociológicos*, 5 (13), January-April 1987.

⁴⁴ On one aborted effort see *Latin American Regional Reports*, Brazil 87-05, 4 June 1987, p. 7. Polls suggested that 90 per cent of those interviewed favoured a social pact, but that 70 per cent thought it would be 'very difficult' to achieve. At the time of writing, another effort was being made, though the major union federations were unenthusiastic. See *Latin American Weekly Report*, 6 October 1988, p. 4. On earlier failures, and the general problem of linking the unions to a successful party-strategy, see M. Keck, 'Labor and transition in Brazil', presented to the conference on 'Labor Movements and Transition to Democracy', the Kellogg Institute, Notre Dame, Indiana, April 1988.

The crucial characteristic of the Austral and Cruzado anti-inflation plans was that they were decreed suddenly by the Argentine and Brazilian presidents without any attempt at consultation with interested groups.⁴⁵ In that sense they were the antithesis of those corporatist pacts which seek to combat inflation by seeking voluntary agreements to moderate class conflict. The Cruzado plan lasted even less time than the Argentine plan on which it had been modelled. As in Argentina and Uruguay, institutionalised cooperation between stable representatives of the state, capital and labour was still a long way off;⁴⁶ this accounted for the military and conservative reluctance to allow changes in the old labour code. In the absence of neo-corporatism, the hope is to fall back on the few vestiges of the old corporatism bequeathed by Vargas.

Consociational mechanisms: the need for centripetal competition

Since labour largely supports opposition parties in the three countries being examined, the previous discussion of the governments' records of failure to achieve consensus on economic policy (especially regarding wages) leads naturally to consideration of the problem of relations between governments and oppositions. Much was heard during the heyday of the transitions about the need for 'consociation' between the parties in order to create a united front. This had, for example, proved very important in stabilising the Colombian and Venezuelan transitions from 1958 onwards. However, the pattern of relations between parties has been rather different than was prescribed.

No one would describe the present style of government in Uruguay as consociational. It is rather a situation of Executive-led government, tempered by the necessary search for a majority in the legislature. What one can say, however, is that relations between the parties have been much smoother and more cooperative than during the period of democratic breakdown from 1968 to 1973.⁴⁷ There is a definite commitment to responsible opposition and some deference to government

⁴⁵ R Kaufman, 'Politics and inflation in Argentina and Brazil: the Austral and Cruzado plans in historical perspective', a paper presented to the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 1987.

⁴⁶ For example, in March 1987 the government decided to send troops and tanks into state-owned oil refineries where the workers were on strike. See *Latin American Weekly Report*, 87 12, 26 March 1987.

⁴⁷ See C Gillespie and M Arregui, 'Uruguay: the challenge of democratic consolidation', *Latin American and Caribbean Contemporary Review*, 5, 1985-6.

by consensus. Argentina took much longer before it began moving in a similar direction, as the early popularity of the Radicals caused them to predict thirty years of power, and even the possibility of changing the Constitution to allow presidential re-election. Their setback at the polls in 1987 caused an abrupt change of tactics: Alfonsín began to call belatedly for a 'Pact of Guarantees' with the Peronists and unions, to ensure that the country should remain 'governable' in the absence of any Radical majority in Congress.⁴⁸ From this perspective, Peronist gains may have favoured the long-run consolidation of democracy by cementing their stake in the system. On the other hand, the Peronists have long had difficulty in defining a strategy for government, rather than for opposition.⁴⁹

In Brazil, the degree of collaboration between the political parties was briefly higher during the decisive phase of transition in 1984-85 than in either of the other two cases.⁵⁰ As with military divisions during the Argentine transition, the fluidity of Brazilian parties was an asset at this stage. However, the alliance proved to be a temporary bandwagon rather than a lasting coalition. President Sarney's administration has been plagued by infighting between the two parties in the governing coalition, quite apart from his difficulties with the opposition. The larger and more amorphous PMDB, with its complex internal factions ranging from progressive to conservative, soon became impatient with the President's handling of the government, while the Partido da Frente Liberal/Liberal Front (PFL) eventually dissolved its alliance with the PMDB.⁵¹ Finally, in mid-1988 the Left of the PMDB lost patience with the party's domination by the Centre-Right, and broke away to found the Partido Social Democrático Brasileiro/Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB).

As parties endlessly splintered, often as a result of rivalries in state politics or the lure of the 'pork-barrel' resources of the Federal Executive, they also found themselves buffeted by the surging support for

⁴⁸ *Latin American Regional Reports. Southern Cone* 87 09, 19 November 1987, pp 2-3.

⁴⁹ L. De Ritz, 'Perspectivas de la democracia: Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay', *Cuadernos de Marcha* (new series), August 1987, p 19.

⁵⁰ See, as part of a burgeoning literature: B. Lamounier and R. Meneguello, 'Political parties and democratic consolidation: the Brazilian case', Wilson Center Latin American Program working paper 165 and M. V. Benevides, 'Brasil 1984: partidos políticos e democracia', a paper presented to the First Symposium of the Southern Cone Forum, Puerto Iguazu, Argentina, 1984.

⁵¹ *Latin American Weekly Report* 87 39, 8 October 1987; *Latin American Regional Reports: Brazil*, 87 09, 22 October 1987. On the convoluted attempts by various Left sectors to decide whether or not to leave the PMDB, and the efforts of the PMDB president, Ulysses Guimarães, to hold the alliance together, see 'Limite da dissidência', *Istoé*, 10 February 1988, pp 22-4.

populist leaders which served to underline the almost complete absence of party institutionalisation.⁵²

To sum up, though 'consociation' has not emerged, Argentina's and Uruguay's opposition parties have become more responsible and loyal to the democratic system than before. Although the trend is unfortunately less evident in Brazil, the other two countries have experienced a strengthening of their party systems in terms of the incorporation of major political forces into the logic of centripetal electoral competition, which should lessen the danger posed by a given level of praetorian mobilisation.⁵³

Has the danger of praetorian mobilisation receded?

The objective social and economic crisis in the countries I have discussed is now worse than in the respective pre-breakdown periods, and perhaps even than in the 1930s. Brazil is likely to experience higher levels of mass praetorianism as political participation continues to boom in new unions, parties, neighbourhood groups, peasant movements and minority associations, unless this is linked to nationwide organisations and mass political parties.⁵⁴ All of these mobilising forces may outstrip the democratic system's capacity to cope. The influence of new social movements based on groups such as the landless peasants may be democratising Brazil's political culture.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, with the partial exception of the Partido dos Trabalhadores/Workers' Party, parties are failing to take command of such movements. Not only are newly assertive popular sectors organising to press demands upon the state, but the Brazilian military has yet to relinquish fully a belief in its right to intervene in politics.

In Argentina there has been a certain exhaustion of praetorian social

⁵² Eventually, a conservative bloc known as the *Centrão* emerged in the Constituent Assembly, although it varied in composition according to the issue at hand. This made possible the final adoption of a new Constitution in October 1988. However, the *Centrão* relied for its existence on the manipulation of executive patronage and was far from manifesting party institutionalisation.

⁵³ What constitutes a 'strong' party system is discussed further in the final section of this article.

⁵⁴ For an essay which highlights the role of such social movements in resisting the authoritarian state, see M H Moreira Alves, 'Grassroots organisations, trade unions and the Church', *Latin American Perspectives*, 11 (1), winter 1984, pp 73-102. Many authors also defend social movements as agents of 'deeper' democratisation than that promoted by liberal representative institutions. See, for example, R Boschi, 'On social movements and democratisation', Stanford Berkeley occasional papers in Latin American Studies no. 9.

⁵⁵ This argument has been made by S Mainwaring and E Viola, 'New social movements, political culture, and democracy', *Telos*, 61, autumn 1984, pp 17-52.

actors and revalorisation of democracy. Opposition to austerity policies has, relatively speaking, been surprisingly weak. However it is not clear whether Argentine society can agree on the policies which would reverse its long-term economic decline.⁵⁶ And the key to overcoming praetorianism lies not just in somehow weakening the power of groups to resist and disrupt the state, but also in strengthening the more encompassing democratic institutions such as parties and legislatures by which they may find their interests represented.⁵⁷ Uruguay presents a similar or even clearer picture of praetorian exhaustion and renewed strength in its democratic institutions. Yet Uruguay shared its neighbours' problem of knowing how to strengthen the links between ruling parties and unions.

The problem of praetorianism does *not* only concern the difficulties of incorporating subordinate classes, but also the reconciliation of capitalist and other elites to the results of competitive mass politics. Some, such as large landowners in Brazil, may find it hard to accept these results, particularly where they fundamentally challenge property relations or a particular aspect of the social order.⁵⁸ In other countries, such as Argentina, industrialists may form an alliance with conservative rural elites when they perceive an unacceptable level of threat from the mobilisation and demands of the urban popular sector.⁵⁹ This may lead to the formation of civil-military alliances, or 'coup coalitions', which deliver the eventual death-blow to democracy. The present progress toward consolidation—relatively high in Uruguay, lower in Argentina, and lower still in Brazil—is in each case an inverse function of the prospects for such alliances emerging.

The sources of praetorianism: political disarticulation

Any attempt to imagine ways to overcome praetorianism and political disarticulation must first consider the reasons why they plague Latin

⁵⁶ C. A. Floria, 'Dilemmas of the consolidation of democracy in Argentina', in E. A. Baloyra (ed), *Comparing New Democracies: transition and consolidation in Mediterranean Europe and the Southern Cone*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987.

⁵⁷ Waldino Suárez has argued that institutional weakness and cabinet instability can become self-perpetuating by undermining the accumulation of leadership experience, particularly in presidential systems. See 'Argentina: political transition and institutional weakness in comparative perspective', in E. Baloyra (ed), *Comparing New Democracies*.

⁵⁸ On the virtual civil war in rural Brazil, see W. C. Smith, 'The political transition in Brazil', in E. Baloyra (ed), *Comparing New Democracies*, pp. 221-3.

⁵⁹ G. O'Donnell, 'State and alliances in Argentina', *Journal of Development Studies* 15 (1), October 1978.

America. The answer requires an understanding of certain long-term structural predicaments. In the first place, mobilisations in civil society are typically defensive rather than creative, oriented toward protest without leading to alternative governing projects. They are frequently symptomatic of weakness rather than strength, and this has led to an impoverishment of political society. Consider, for example, the case of labour unions: were they to be more united they might be better able to influence the government through political alliances. Even Argentina's Peronist unions, which possess a greater capacity for political sponsorship of candidates and economic disruption than any other Latin American unions, suffer from divisions in a pattern somewhat akin to Britain's Trades Union Congress (TUC).

The second structural factor in contemporary praetorianism in Latin America stems from the fact that states have been forced to play a greater role in accumulation than elsewhere in the capitalist world, both supplementing and protecting business. They also face more urgent demands for redistribution, while lacking resources to satisfy them. The more markets give way to public decisions, the more easily the politicisation of class and economic struggles will occur. The 'stakes' of politics are increased, and so therefore are the incentives for mobilisation.

The third structural factor is that political parties have often relied on their intimate relations with the state in order to mobilise patronage and support. This has led to the neglect of organisation by entrenched government parties, and a corresponding tendency for oppositions to oppose not only the government, but the regime and even the state itself. The few parties with a strong social base have often experienced major internal conflicts when passing from opposition to control of government as a result of their factionalism and lack of internal democracy. This was the fate of Peronism after Perón's death.

The final structural factor, and the one which ultimately makes outbreaks of praetorianism deadly to democracies, is the endemic politicisation of the military. Apart from a tradition of intervention, armed forces have since the Cuban revolution benefited from stepped-up US training and aid, and have repeatedly been marked as the institution most likely to bring the regional stability which the USA desires. Exclusionist military regimes arise when political pressures become uncontrollable, politicians lose control and the state enters serious fiscal crises. This repeated pattern of short-term 'solutions' to crises hinders attempts to find long-term resolutions for conflicts.

The result of all this may be called 'political disarticulation'.⁶⁰ The disjunction between the organisations for the defence of class on the one hand, and collective institutions of representation on the other, constitutes a structural source of instability. Praetorian social actors may be dormant, but so long as their best strategy for affecting government policies during periods of crisis remains the desperate one of trying to disrupt and confront the state because representative mechanisms are seen as inadequate, the polity remains disarticulated. Crises of government thus become crises of regime.

Where the theory of praetorianism focuses on the dangers of uncontrolled and unmediated social mobilisations, a broader understanding of the problem requires consideration of the equilibrium between rival sources of power in the state, polity and civil society.⁶¹ In stable democracies, these three sources of power are heavily interwoven, endowments in one arena often being 'exchanged' for influence in another, but always with the institutions of the polity establishing a certain degree of autonomy and hegemony. On the other hand, democracy is threatened by asymmetries and gaps in the distribution of power across different arenas, particularly the polity and society, so that groups consider themselves inadequately 'represented' in politics.⁶²

Beyond political disarticulation? The importance of strong party systems

No political system is ever entirely in equilibrium, least of all a democracy. But a reasonably 'articulated' political society is one in which the balance of power among social groups is roughly aligned with their

⁶⁰ Political disarticulation is discussed by M Cavarozzi, 'Political cycles in Argentina since 1955', in G O'Donnell *et al* (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, pp 23-8. Cavarozzi argued that the military's insistence on excluding Peronism from the electoral game forced it to mobilise labour on the basis of the praetorian game. However, this disjunction can also arise in less extreme form without formally prohibiting parties from taking part in elections if powerful social and economic groups fail to achieve adequate influence in parties and legislatures.

⁶¹ In terms of game theory a focus on praetorianism consists of a discussion of the consequences of a situation of the Prisoner's Dilemma, whereas a focus on political disarticulation draws our attention to the factors which give rise to the Prisoner's Dilemma payoff matrix.

⁶² This is reminiscent of Frank Parkin's work on the origins of revolutions, which he roots in the 'mismatches' of political, social and economic power: 'by power equilibrium is meant simply a high degree of congruence between the various dimensions of stratification, such that economic, social and political power follow roughly the same pattern of distribution. Power disequilibrium is said to occur where these three elements of the stratification order do not exhibit the same general profile...' See 'System contradiction and political transformation', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 1972, p 16. Of course, the result can be permanent instability rather than revolution, where the balance of competing forces merely fluctuates without subordinate classes ever managing to gain the upper hand

relative strength in the institutions of the polity. Where this rough balance exceeds certain limits, the result is that political actors will choose to take their leave of the constitutional political game. In much of Latin America, power groups have not been able to create stable political coalitions on the basis of overarching and encompassing interests, nor link these to strong parties which compete peacefully for power, while accepting that these may be defeated.

Two broad conclusions thus emerge, the first concerning the problem of the relations between the state and civil society. Democratic consolidation does not only require the strengthening of civil society in order to resist authoritarian rule, an aim often emphasised in the early days of opposition to repression. The weakening of the coercive and manipulative capacities of the authoritarian state is often vital in precipitating the transition—but democratic stability thereafter will require the *recomposition* and assertion of the autonomy of political society. In short, the empowerment of the polity.⁶³

A second conclusion is that the forging of links between parties and interest groups not only strengthens the opposition to military rule, but in the period of democratic consolidation favours the consolidation of a political arena based on representation, and favours bargaining rather than praetorianism. Yet it is not merely strong parties which are needed for democratic consolidation, but strong party systems. This distinction has frequently been the Achilles heel of democracy in Argentina.⁶⁴ But what are the characteristics of a strong party system?

One of the key features of party systems which nurture democratic survival is that they provide guaranteed 'space' for losers.⁶⁵ Uruguay's historic ability to provide such a space for conservatives is an example of success which contrasted the electoral frustration of the Left (which therefore turned to revolutionary strategies even under democracy). After 1916 when the Radicals began to win every election, and 1946 when the same applies for the Peronists, the frustration of

⁶³ The failure of corporatist attempts to stabilise labour relations can lead to attempts to coopt only the most powerful sectors. See J Goldthorpe, 'The end of convergence: corporatist and dualist tendencies in modern Western societies', in J Goldthorpe (ed), *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism*. Yet, apart from the inferiority of such solutions from the point of view of distributive justice, unincorporated interest will always constitute a potentially explosive stratum.

⁶⁴ Marcelo Cavarozzi has alleged that Argentina's instability has been rooted in a situation of strong parties, without a strong party system, in the sense of one which can defend the collective interest of the democratic system *vis-à-vis* rival power centres. See 'The Argentine Parties: strong subcultures, weak system', manuscript, CEDS, 1985.

⁶⁵ L Morlino, 'Consolidamento democratico: alcune ipotesi esplicative', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 13 (3), December 1986.

conservatives in Argentina led to a symmetrically opposite turn to support for authoritarianism. What is encouraging is that Uruguay has been more successful at coopting a loyal Left into the electoral game since 1984, just as Argentina has with its conservatives.

Ultimately, politicians must stand together when democracy is under threat. The 'minimum requirements' for the foundation of a party system able to promote democratic consolidation would seem to be: democratisation of the Left and Right; centripetal electoral competition; and a degree of cooperation between parties, based on 'loyal opposition' and 'tolerant government'. Important evidence that a party system has reached democratic maturity arises when elections lead to peaceful transfers of power from one party to another.⁶⁶ Future research will have to focus far more deeply on the role of party systems as crucial variables in the success of democratic consolidation. Brazil's pattern of highly fluid parties and virtual absence of a party system is fundamentally different from the far more established parties and party systems of Uruguay and Argentina. Unfortunately, it is almost certainly also much more corrosive of democratic stability.

As Rustow has suggested, the 'decision phase' in which democracy is inaugurated by political actors must be followed by an 'habituation phase' in which instrumental attachment gives way to a commitment to democracy as an end in itself.⁶⁷ In Uruguay this process can benefit from an ingrained previous democratic legacy; in Argentina it may be taking hold anyway. In Brazil, the comparatively lesser experience with 'democratic mistakes' complicates the process of political learning in the new democracy, while popular and elite revulsion against authoritarianism may not be as great as in Uruguay or Argentina.

Even given the existence of strong parties and party systems, sectoral interest groups and unions will not cease to pressurise governments. If they become more centralised and encompassing, and more allied to parties, their pressures will be less intractable, even as they become more powerful.⁶⁸ However, nothing guarantees that the rational calculus of interests will automatically allow democracy to be consolidated, given the pronounced tendency for cyclical crises under capitalism and the great gaps between popular expectations and available resources.

⁶⁶ I have discussed some of these issues in the conclusion to 'Activists and floating voters: the unheeded lessons of Uruguay's 1982 primaries', in P Drake and E Silva (eds), *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980-85*, San Diego: CILAS, 1986.

⁶⁷ D Rustow, 'Transitions to democracy', *Comparative Politics* 2 (3), 1970, pp 337-63.

⁶⁸ R Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982.

There is no necessary 'hidden hand' in the polity: yet one of the peculiar virtues of democracies is that they are arguably the only systems in which one may arise.

Conserving nature, decreasing debt

Two crises haunt the Third World today: the debt burden and environmental degradation. The debts arising from the borrowing which took place in the 1970s in order to produce economic growth, and which failed to cover its costs have brought to Third World countries a legacy of run-down infrastructure and reduced social services, a situation compounded by the insistence of Western lenders that they curtail expenses still further in order to keep paying. At the same time, and in part because of these pressures, many Third World countries are rapidly running down their stock of natural resources—forests, fisheries, minerals and grazing lands—with the result that they suffer frequent droughts and floods, erosion, landslides and other ‘natural’ disasters, and face the loss of a patrimony which could provide their future generations indefinitely with a comfortable and secure means of living.

While there are no simple or easy solutions to either of these crises, the industrialised countries are beginning to realise that Third World environmental degradation will adversely affect their own long-term well-being, and that they should therefore be contributing to Third World environmental protection or restoration out of self-interest. Herein lies an opportunity for the Third World to achieve a measure of debt relief, while protecting key natural ecosystems and moving towards more environmentally sustainable modes of economic activity. This article will focus on one widely discussed approach: the reduction of debts owed to Western lenders in exchange for the conservation of natural ecosystems.

The economic crisis: what does it involve?

Few observers really believe that the Third World can repay the debt, of over one trillion dollars, that it owes to Western private lenders, governments and international institutions; certainly the banks, which have quietly written off substantial portions of their overseas loans and sold others at heavy discounts, do not seem to consider repayment to be possible. A combination of the ability of modern technology to create substitutes for most of the Third World’s raw materials, the

increase in value added through processing, protectionist barriers against Third World manufactures, and high US interest rates aimed to cushion the devaluation of the dollar make it almost inconceivable that heavily indebted Third World countries could pay off their debts on terms anywhere near as stringent as those currently imposed upon them. These factors are clearly beyond the Third World's control, and thus in a morally just world these countries might well be forgiven their debts. However, in our present world it is unlikely that Western bankers and governments will drop all their claims for repayment, no matter how severe the cost to debtor countries in terms of health and educational facilities, communications, environmental protection and even human lives,¹ although one can argue that the Third World countries were sold a bill of goods in the 1970s by Western bankers anxious to recycle 'petrodollars' and by development 'experts', who now insist that the Third World pay the price for their bad advice.

At the same time, the exploitation of natural resources is intensified in order to finance interest repayments on the debt. Much of this 'resource development' is carried out by foreign-owned businesses, although some of the benefits go to a rather limited number of nationals. Almost always it is a 'once-off' activity, whether it be creating a nickel mine in the Dominican Republic or logging a virgin forest in Indonesia, and because to a large extent it is a forced sale, countries are not realising as much gain from liquidating their capital as they might under less urgent circumstances.

Natural ecosystems in the Third World: what is being lost?

The destruction of natural ecosystems through agriculture, urbanisation and resource extraction has always been a facet of human progress. However, until this century it generally took place against a background of substantial blocks of natural areas which remained intact. What is new in the present situation is that all the areas comprising major ecosystems may be destroyed within the next fifty years, and this would result in costs even higher than those imposed by, for example, dumping toxic wastes into the ground or the oceans.

I use the term 'natural ecosystems' here to refer to those ecosystems not significantly altered by human intervention. Such human activity

¹ Even such an apolitical body as UNICEF has charged that the deaths of at least 500,000 children in 1988 could be attributed to the cuts in health care forced by countries' struggles to pay their foreign debt charges. *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 21 December 1988.

as does occur (such as gathering nuts or fruit, collecting building materials or hunting game) does not result in substantial changes in the ecosystem. Any ecosystem, of course, is undergoing constant change, but on a biological time-scale measured in centuries or millenia: a plant develops a poison such as caffeine or nicotine to ward off attacks by insect predators, an insect species develops an enzyme which can dispose of this poison and thus allows it to eat the plant. Out of these processes of adaptation come countless substances which we have found beneficial. 'Conservation' involves maintaining a sufficient amount of each natural ecosystem so that these processes of evolution can continue undisturbed. Conservation also entails using those parts of the world that we do alter in ways that will allow future generations to continue to use them. In short, conservation is about foreclosing the fewest possible options for future generations.

Among the natural ecosystems being destroyed today through logging, clearing for agriculture, pollution and drainage, tropical moist forests (or 'rainforests') are the most significant. These forests contain at least half the species of living organisms on our planet, as well as the greatest quantity of living material, or biomass, per unit of space. Estimates by Norman Myers on the basis of data from the early 1980s suggest that just under 200,000 km² a year were being destroyed or grossly disrupted;² more recent data suggest that the rate of destruction has increased sharply, with Brazilian Amazonia alone losing 125,000 km² in both 1987 and 1988.³ Even at the slower rate, all the world's remaining eight million km² of tropical forest would have disappeared by the year 2035 at the latest, and lowland forests, which are most accessible for logging, would be gone much sooner.

The most obvious costs of this destruction are borne by the people who rely on the forests for their homes and livelihoods; and the world economy loses products such as rubber, Brazil nuts and rattan. Loss of large blocks of forest means a 50 per cent reduction in rainfall around and within them. The montane forests hold soil and water, thus providing year-round water supplies, and protection against landslides and the silting of hydro-electric and irrigation dams. These services are considered to be 'free', but there is a substantial economic cost if any of them are taken away. For example, in Honduras the unit cost of provid-

² N Myers, 'Tropical deforestation and a mega-extinction spasm' in M Soule (ed), *Conservation Biology: the science of scarcity and diversity*, Sunderland, Massachusetts: Sinauer Associates, 1986, p 399. See also N Guppy, 'Tropical deforestation: a global view', *Foreign Affairs* 2 (4), spring 1984, p 929.

³ *Guardian Weekly* (London), 30 October 1988.

ing drinking water for the capital from a protected forest source was calculated at 0.04 the cost of providing water from a deforested watershed.⁴

But the more serious consequences of losing these forests will not arise until well into the future, and are payable by people far removed from the scene of destruction. In order to cope with the diverse predators and pathogens that could destroy them, tropical plants protect themselves by means of an astounding range of genetic adaptations. Substances such as curare, the Amazonian hunters' poison now widely used in surgery as a relaxant, and vincristine, derived from the rosy periwinkle of Madagascar and which has vastly improved the survival chances of children suffering from leukemia, are widely-known examples of the pharmaceutical drugs which have already been discovered in this cauldron of life. There are potentially hundreds, if not thousands of such substances in the tropical forests—if we can find them before they are wiped out.⁵ Similarly, there is an immense potential range of industrial substances, from petrol substitutes to gums and rubbers to canes and edible oils.⁶ With the developments of modern biotechnology, the possibility of incorporating genes that provide resistance to plant diseases (which, of course, are also constantly evolving ways to overcome the plants' resistance) has greatly increased; but the genetic material is needed in order to accomplish these 'miracles'. This particular cost of the destruction of tropical rainforest will be borne, therefore, by future generations throughout the world in the form of more costly or less diversified foods and industrial materials, as well as illnesses and deaths that might have been prevented. Since the wealthier and more technologically advanced countries of the North would be the first to benefit from this genetic pool, they should be prepared to pay for its survival.

A further cost of tropical deforestation may be a change in global weather patterns and climate, extending to the major food-growing zones of the northern hemisphere. One source of change could be the increased albedo (reflection of the sun's energy from the Earth's surface) as forest is transformed into cropland or pasture; this could lead to a weakening of the tropical heat engine which affects air circulation patterns as far north as the mid-latitudes of Canada and the Soviet Union,

⁴ C Quesada Mateo, 'La Tigra national park: a source of concern', IUCN *Bulletin* 18 (10-12), October-December 1987, p 14.

⁵ See N Myers, *The Primary Source: tropical forests and our future*, New York: W W Norton, 1985, pp 210-23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 226-59.

and in particular to decreased rainfall in the world's major grain belts.⁷ But the albedo effect is minor compared to the potential problems arising from the 'greenhouse effect': carbon dioxide and other gases trap increased amounts of the sun's energy in the atmosphere, with the resulting increase in world temperatures probably producing inland droughts and rising sea levels, as well as other unpredictable effects. The replacement of tropical forests by the much lower biomass of farm crops and secondary growth has been estimated to release at least two billion tonnes of carbon (in the form of carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere each year, and while this is less than the five billion tonnes released world-wide each year by the burning of fossil fuels, it still approximately equals the 2.3 billion tonnes net annual increase of atmospheric carbon that has been measured.⁸ In other words, bringing a total halt to tropical forest destruction (or halving the consumption of fossil fuels) would be enough to reduce the total output of carbon dioxide to a level that could be absorbed by the earth's 'carbon sinks'.

There are, in short, strong motivations of self-interest that ought to lead the Western industrial states to support effective conservation measures. Even at that supremely self-satisfied gathering of major Western political leaders, the 1988 economic summit in Toronto, Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany proposed that they ought to reward developing countries that protected their forests by forgiving some of their debts,⁹ although there was no mention of this proposal in the final communiqué by all the leaders.

But while protection of tropical ecosystems may be of interest to the North, which already has largely devastated its own natural ecosystems, what do Third World countries stand to gain? On the face of it, there would seem to be a great deal of logic in the 'conventional wisdom' that these ecosystems contain the main resources they possess, such as timber, hydro-electric power, fertile land for agriculture and so on, and that they should follow the same path as the already rich nations by exploiting these resources on a once-off basis to build up their wealth, which they could then gradually channel into other more industrial activities.

There are several good reasons why the protection of these ecosystems would be more beneficial to Third World countries than their

⁷ For differing views in this debate, see C Sagan *et al*, 'Anthropogenic albedo changes and the Earth's climate', *Science* 206, 1979, pp 1363-68, and G L Potter *et al*, 'Albedo change by man: test of climatic effects', *Nature* 291, 7 May 1981, pp 47-49.

⁸ G M Woodwell, 'The carbon dioxide question', *Scientific American* 238 (1) January 1978, p 37.

⁹ *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 20 June 1988.

destruction. First, the non-economic benefits of conservation are significant to many indigenous peoples, who find sacred or spiritual qualities in their natural surroundings. Although these people generally hold only marginal political power within their states, their desire to conserve these areas will continue to gain more and more support, even if for more aesthetic and recreational reasons, from an increasingly numerous and prosperous urban middle class, as one can already see happening in such newly-industrialising countries as Malaysia. Nigel Collar has argued persuasively that to wipe out these ecosystems and the species in them is to curtail the freedom of individuals, by denying them the opportunity to enjoy the existence of such species in the future;¹⁰ and on a more materialistic level, a loss of ecosystems cuts down future options for all human activities, economic as well as social.

Second, while volcanic and floodplain soils are capable of sustaining agriculture for centuries, the majority of tropical soils are not. Most forest clearing in Amazonia and in Africa can provide only a few years of cleared-land farming before the farmers are forced to move on. Sustainable farming in single locations involves getting farmers to adopt often labour-intensive methods, such as the 'matengo pit' system of alternating pits to catch water and heaped-up soil in order to grow plants on dry hillsides,¹¹ or the 'chinampas' system of agroforestry in tropical moist forests,¹² whose benefits may not be apparent until there is no new land to clear.

Finally, the economic argument that exploiting one's natural resources to the full will provide the wealth to finance more technological development depends on some rather shaky assumptions. First, it assumes that somewhere there are the raw materials available to support this industrialisation, and in particular, adequate food supplies that a country can import. Second, it assumes either that the country will be able to sell its industrial products on world markets, or else that it has a big enough domestic market to absorb the increasing range of products from its industrialisation. Third, it assumes that the money it can get from its present exploitation of natural resources is in fact sufficient to finance this industrialisation.

The case for conservation, then, involves both the positive arguments that it offers long-term sustainable economic benefits and a range of

¹⁰ N J Collar, 'Species are a measure of man's freedom: reflections after writing a Red Data Book on African birds', *Oryx* 20, 1986, p 18.

¹¹ R Dumont and M-F Mottin, *Stranglehold on Africa*, London: André Deutsch, 1983, p 151.

¹² J D Nations and D I Komer, 'Central America's tropical rainforests: positive steps for survival', *Ambio* 12 (5) 1983, pp 232-38.

non-economic benefits; and a negative one—that the alternative to exploiting one's natural ecosystems on a one-shot basis in order to build up financing for more advanced technological development is a mirage. The struggle to protect natural ecosystems continues to be an uphill battle, which leads to the question: who benefits from their destruction, and in what ways?

The politics of conservation: the local arena

A clear answer is suggested by examining who benefits from such ecologically destructive 'development' activities such as the current logging practices in Southeast Asia and Africa, and the clearing of forest for settlement and ranching projects in Brazil. In logging, while some local people are employed to fell and haul logs, the bulk of the money goes to the timber concessionaires and their overseas backers; and since raw logs are still shipped overseas, much of the final value, added through processing, goes to Japanese and other overseas industries.¹³ In Brazil, poor settlers in Amazonia have cleared their patch of land, discovered in two or three years that it would not yield a living, sold to large-scale speculators and moved on to try elsewhere, conveniently taking the pressure for land reform off their regions of origin. In short, the major benefits from development activities tend to go to an already affluent group and to companies from the industrialised states. Some poorer citizens may improve their situation, such as the Javanese resettled as a result of Indonesia's transmigration scheme, but for many settlers the gains are only short-term and the local inhabitants are almost invariably left worse off by the destruction of their homeland. Many of these activities give the appearance of benefiting the poor and the landless, but it is an illusion.

Even when they are not benefiting in financial terms from the exploitation of natural ecosystems, the privileged sectors of society are generally very much aware that the alternative to allowing the poor to exploit these areas is to permit major land reforms. It is therefore only to be expected that their willingness to support the conservation of these areas will generally be limited. Add to this the fact that they can benefit as *compradors* in the logging, mining and other exploitative activities

¹³ Data in a detailed study of Malaysia's industry indicate that more than three-quarters of the sawlogs are exported unprocessed. See R Kumar, *The Forest Resources of Malaysia*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp 91, 100. He also notes that while it contributes more than 5 per cent of GDP, the forest industry employs less than 3 per cent of the labour force, and most of that is in saw-milling and other processing activities (pp 9, 154).

undertaken by foreign companies, and one sees a very potent source of opposition to any large-scale conservation effort.¹⁴

Beyond these economic pressures favouring the quick exploitation of natural resources, Third World political leaders generally share with their counterparts in the North the view that natural ecosystems simply represent 'free' resources to be exploited as expeditiously as possible, and that the best measure of well-being for a people is the extent to which it can transform these resources into material goods for consumption without limit. Few leaders yet seem ready to accept the view of the Prime Minister of Norway, Harlem Brundtland, or President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, that 'growth' and 'conservation' need not be conflicting goals, but can indeed be complementary ones.¹⁵ Third World leaders, whether popularly based or self-appointed, tend to face less domestic pressure than their Northern counterparts to consider environmental alternatives because their environmental movements generally are relatively weaker; they also are under stronger pressure to achieve economic development because of population growth, demands for land and desire for more material wealth, in addition to the demands of their creditors.

Unfortunately, those who benefit from the protection of natural areas such as parks or reserves are not necessarily those who lose out under development schemes. I have already noted that one important long-term benefit of conserving Third World natural ecosystems—the preservation of a diversity of genetic resources—will probably be most fully exploited by the more technologically advanced societies. Also, both scientific researchers and tourists visiting reserves and parks are likely to come from the more affluent countries (although we should note that the results of some of this research will trickle down to the local population). Within the country which is setting aside protected areas, the people most likely to visit are the members of the middle class, a pattern already clearly established in India and to a lesser extent in Latin America. The services provided for visitors have generally been organised by large outside operators, although there are a few parks where local people manage the concessions, as in Amboseli Park,

¹⁴ The conflicts in Brazil between Indians, rubber tappers and others who depend upon or live in the Amazonian forest, and the large ranchers who wish to clear it, are a case in point. See, for example, *International Wildlife*, July/August 1988, pp 24–28. In fairness, we should note that a few large companies, such as the Brazilian mining company CVRD and the Sabah Foundation in Malaysia, have done excellent conservation work—but they are exceptional.

¹⁵ For Gro Brundtland's views, see H Brundtland, *Our Common Future*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987 (hereafter *Brundtland Report*).

Kenya.¹⁶ The local inhabitants, in fact, have all too frequently been pushed aside or ignored when a reserve has been established, with the result that the reserve begins to resemble an armed fortress fending off the outside world.¹⁷ Alternatively, where the central government operates the facilities, collects entrance fees and generally takes any revenue arising from conservation activities, little monetary benefit comes back either to the park or the local people.

A reserve existing in a sea of local hostility is not likely to survive for long, especially if the central government wishes to gain popularity among the local populace. There is another biological reason for involving the local people in the maintenance of reserves. Few countries can set aside the blocks of 1,000 km² that many biologists consider desirable for the long-term survival of an ecosystem as complex as a tropical rainforest.¹⁸ This does not necessarily mean that there will be massive impoverishment of the biota if primary forests are reduced to a series of smaller fragments; a number of studies¹⁹ suggest that a modest primary forest core surrounded by a larger buffer which provides suitable habitat for larger or more sparsely distributed species should probably not lose too many species, provided that the buffer zone is only utilised in relatively low-impact ways (such as controlled hunting and selective logging). Such an arrangement is being tested in Bolivia's Beni World Biosphere Reserve, and also in the Korup Park in Cameroon. This approach of allowing the local human inhabitants to carry out a range of monitored activities within a protected area offers two key benefits: it expands the area in which a natural ecosystem can continue to function, with all that this implies for the maintenance of species and genetic diversity; and it does not threaten the lifestyles of the local inhabitants.

Conservation: the international dimension

Even if a national political leader were willing to confront both his own national business class and powerful foreign corporations by seeking to

¹⁶ D Western, 'Amboseli national park: enlisting landowners to conserve migratory wildlife', *Ambio* 11 (1982), pp 302-308.

¹⁷ For examples from Africa, see D Turton, 'The Mursi and national park development', and R H V Bell, 'Conservation with a human face: conflict and reconciliation in African land use planning', both in D Anderson & R Grove (eds), *Conservation in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; also S Oldfield (ed), *Buffer Zone Management in Tropical Moist Forests. case studies and guidelines*, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN Tropical Forest Programme, 1988, p 16.

¹⁸ I Rubinoff, 'A strategy for preserving tropical rainforests', *Ambio* 12 (5) 1983, pp 255-58.

¹⁹ For example, A D Johns, 'Selective logging and wildlife conservation in tropical rainforest: problems and recommendations', *Biological Conservation* 31, 1985, pp 355-75.

protect key portions of ecosystems, he would have other problems to overcome. The most pressing problem would be debt relief: how could the money be found to meet the annual interest payments? This is where the debt crisis has temporarily opened a 'window of opportunity' for some conservation measures. While such measures can only make a small dent in the total debt problem (even Rubinoff's grand scheme of compensation for a world-wide system of tropical forest reserves involved only some \$3 billion a year, less than one-fiftieth of the total annual debt service bill),²⁰ they do offer a mutually face-saving compromise on the debt issue, while providing a substantial benefit in terms of conservation. Some purists will object that since the debts themselves were illegitimately foisted on the Third World, any action which legitimates them ought to be repudiated (just as hard-liners among the banking fraternity dismiss any action which appears to 'forgive' debtors), but it seems to me unrealistic to expect that creditor governments and private institutions will ever accept a total repudiation of these debts, and thus it would be sensible to seek a myriad of modest actions that could be undertaken relatively quickly, and that could contribute to an overall reduction of the debt burden.

Among conservation non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the West, 'debt-for-conservation' swaps have attracted wide attention. The sale by creditor banks of debts at a discount in the secondary market has allowed Western conservation NGOs to buy up some of the debts, and then arrange to write off the debt in exchange for the debtor country putting some local currency (and effort) into conservation. Three widely publicised agreements were reached in 1987. In Bolivia, the government had created the Beni Biological Reserve of 134,000 hectares in 1982, but lacked the funds to develop and safeguard it effectively. Seeking the resources to make the reserve effective, a US foundation, Conservation International, in 1987 acquired a Bolivian debt of \$650,000, discounted to \$100,000, from a Swiss bank. Conservation International then cancelled the \$650,000 debt, and in exchange the Bolivian government set up a zone of 1.4 million hectares around the reserve and a \$250,000 endowment, to be managed by a Bolivian foundation, and asked Conservation International to advise on the management of the reserve for the next five years. Steps are currently under way to draw up a management plan which will involve the local people in the

²⁰ I Rubinoff, 'A Strategy for preserving tropical rainforests', pp 257-58.

buffer zone around the reserve.²¹ In Costa Rica and Ecuador somewhat different arrangements were made with World Wildlife Fund-US and the Nature Conservancy. These NGOs acquired debts at a heavy discount, and cancelled them in return for long-term local currency bonds issued by the governments concerned, in order to finance conservation activities. In each of these cases, the specific scheme arose out of a broad commitment by the national government to protect the area concerned, and the implementation arrangements are under the control of a locally based foundation: this has so far succeeded in deflecting the charge that foreigners are forcing the country to do what they want. Other similar arrangements are under negotiation, aided by a US Internal Revenue Service ruling which allows US banks to claim as a tax deduction the value given by the debtor country in its own currency to the conservation NGO for the debt instrument, even though it had sold the instrument to the NGO for a good deal less.²²

Limited in scope though they are, these arrangements have enabled governments to protect critical areas to which they might not otherwise have been able to allocate resources. The fact that such areas have been operated through national conservation foundations and have been fitted within the context of overall government conservation objectives has reduced the perception that foreigners are dictating the government's priorities.²³ Unlike debt-for-equity swaps, they do not give ownership of a country's resources to a foreign entity. However, it remains to be seen whether such schemes could be worked in a situation where powerful business interests or other government departments have different goals, such as, for example, Peru's Manu Park or parts of Sumatra or Irian Jaya in Indonesia. It is also cause for concern that so far the emphasis has been on the immediate task of setting aside and protecting specific areas; yet if these areas are to avoid biological isolation and continual encroachment, the people living around them must be provided with access to alternative land, fuelwood and other resources. This could be achieved through some kind of sustainable agro-

²¹ For details of this and other debt swaps, see B Bramble, 'How debt can be swapped for trees', Washington DC: US National Wildlife Federation, unpublished paper, May 1988; and for a more general examination, see her 'The debt crisis: the opportunities', *Ecologist* 17 (4/5) 1987, pp 192-99.

²² US Internal Revenue Service, *Advance Ruling* 87-124, 12 November 1987.

²³ Various Latin American delegates at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature General Assembly in Costa Rica, February 1988, told me that there was surprisingly little objection in their countries to the debt-for-nature swap approach; a few intellectuals thought Latin Americans should be undertaking these measures themselves without outside help, but there was little objection to the idea of conserving these areas.

forestry on lands already altered by human activity, but would be both costly and time-consuming.

Private arrangements between NGOs and Third World countries make only a very small impact on the two problems of ecosystem destruction and debt payments. For example, the Costa Rican scheme involves some \$5.4 million of debt, and the country has put a limit of \$50 million on all such schemes whereas it owes a total of \$4 billion. As far as conservation is concerned, the total need is equally beyond the capabilities of the private NGOs. To protect only 10 per cent of the world's tropical forests would involve creating some 800 reserves of 1,000 km² each, and even if such blocks could be found, the countries concerned might plausibly argue that selling the timber in one such reserve could earn them \$5–10 billion.²⁴

The financing for conservation on a scale that will match these potential earnings and thus protect viable portions of the tropical world's natural ecosystems will have to come through schemes either backed by or financed directly by governments. The use of debt swaps here raises a number of much greater difficulties, beginning with the willingness of Western governments to fund such actions (which will require a major lobbying effort by their NGOs). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) say that they are at present precluded by their charters from 'forgiving' debts through such arrangements, although lobbying is under way in the USA and elsewhere to change these rules.

From a Third World perspective, the fact that Western governments have the power to exert greater pressure on them than that of Western NGOs means that the danger of their priorities being set by outsiders is increased. To be sure, this is already being done on a far larger scale through the IMF, but this hardly justifies accepting what could easily be seen as yet another form of neo-colonialism. Then too, there is the question of whether Western governments would try to pass off debt-for-conservation swaps as an alternative to more fundamental changes in the international economy, or use them to justify curtailing aid programmes, in which case there would be no new money coming into the Third World.

Third World NGOs also have further justifiable concerns: whether the government in question would in fact involve local people in any conservation arrangements, and more broadly, who within the country

²⁴ For example, the Danum Valley reserve of the Sabah Foundation contains an estimated \$750 million worth of timber in its 9,300 hectares, or about \$8 million per km², a figure in line with other Asian dipterocarp forests. African primary forests would be worth about the same, while Amazonian ones would be worth somewhat less.

would reap what kind of benefits from the deal; what type of control the government might be able to exercise over the activities of the NGO as part of its monitoring of the arrangements; and whether the government would use this revenue to justify cutting back other funding for conservation programmes. There is also considerable concern that massive plans worked out by Western and Third World governments acting in concert are likely to be aimed at further exploitation of natural areas rather than at their protection. The major example of such a scheme, the Tropical Forest Action Plan (backed by the World Bank) is sufficiently ambiguous in its goals to have led the NGOs concerned to believe that it will simply commercialise forests in ways that reduce poor peoples' access to them, and turn primary forests into plantations.²⁵

Finally, for both governments and NGOs there is the moral question underlying any attempt at long-term conservation while short-run needs remain unfulfilled. As one Latin American conservationist explained: 'The banks are asking us to put aside land for the future, while people are dying of hunger and ill health.' The only answer to this, he suggested, was to ensure that conservation was carried out in ways that did provide benefits for people, and to make clear to people the nature of these benefits.²⁶

Despite these cautions, Third World countries concerned about their long-term self-interest would do well to examine such arrangements with institutions from the North, both private NGOs and also government agencies. The value of biological reserves—particularly tropical rainforests—can only increase as our need for, and our ability to use, genetic materials grows. There is a sharpening awareness, among the public and even among politicians in the West, of the importance of these genetic reservoirs as well as of the potential climatic impact resulting from the destruction of tropical forests. Such awareness gives Third World states an opportunity to obtain wealth from these areas without necessarily cutting them down and selling them to the industrialised states. Provided that they also bargain for the financing to establish alternative ways of living on the land for their people, Third World states *can* have their forests and live off them too, for a price a good

²⁵ The TAP is described in *Tropical Forests: a call for action*, 3 volumes, Washington DC: World Resources Institute, 1985. For critiques, see especially V Shiva, 'Forestry myths and the World Bank: a critical review of *Tropical Forests: a call for action*', *Ecologist* 17 (4/5), July/November 1987, pp 142–149; M Renner, 'A critical review of *Tropical Forests: a call for action*', *ibid* p 150; and various letters in *ibid* 18 (1) 1988, pp 35–40.

²⁶ Eric Cardich Briceño of Peru, at IUCN General Assembly, San José, Costa Rica, 3 February 1988.

deal lower than they will have to pay once they have exhausted them by present methods of exploitation.

It can be objected that debt swaps of any sort tacitly grant the legitimacy of the Third World's debts, and therefore should be totally shunned. I suggested above that such a view is unrealistic, and in any case, even if there were some eventual possibility of achieving a full repudiation of these debts, the threat to natural ecosystems is severe enough that action needs to be taken even at the cost of principles. (I could draw a parallel here to the readiness of African front-line states to buy food from South Africa when faced with famine.)

Many people in both the North and the South now recognise that the contribution of tropical ecosystems to the welfare of mankind is so great that everyone ought to contribute to their survival. With sufficient prodding from their own NGOs, Third World governments can press for financial support, in order to help them to protect major ecosystems from further damage; and they can certainly expect support in this demand from Northern NGOs. Since most states can be moved to act when their own well-being is threatened, the present situation provides a promising opportunity for Third World governments to seek an improvement on both their environmental and economic front.

Dematerialisation of production: impact on raw material exports of developing countries

Raw material prices have begun to rise again. After a steep fall in 1981 and 1982, a weak recovery in 1983 and 1984, and a further decline in 1985 and 1986, prices have increased considerably since the beginning of 1987.¹ The price of copper, for example, more than doubled in 1987 alone. Is the crisis for the producers over?

This article maintains that structural changes, which contribute to an increasing downward pressure on raw material prices, are now taking place. The 'dematerialisation of production' represents an important aspect of these changes.² The application of microelectronics, biotechnology and new materials tends to reduce the quantity of raw material required for each unit of output and makes it possible to produce devices with the same (or an enhanced) *use value* in a much less intensive use of raw material. Examples abound:

Microelectronics contributes to a miniaturisation of devices, makes possible better designs that economise on raw materials, and improves the logistics of production so that smaller inventories are necessary.

Biotechnology helps to economise on energy, to reduce the use of fertilisers and pesticides, and to recover useful raw materials from waste.

New materials comprise very strong materials (such as thin fibres that replace steel ropes), very light materials (to reduce energy consumption) and more durable materials that will have to be replaced less often.

¹ See International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*, Washington DC: IMF, 1988, p 89.

² See K Sargeant, *Biotechnology, Connectedness and Dematerialisation: the strategic challenges to Europe and the community response*, paper presented at the conference 'Biotechnology '84', organised by the Royal Irish Academy and the Society for General Microbiology at Dublin, 1-2 May 1984. G Junne, 'Nuevas Tecnologías: una amenaza para las exportaciones de los países en desarrollo', in Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social/Oficina Internacional del Trabajo, Proyecto Planificación y Políticas del Empleo, *Efectos sobre la División Internacional del Trabajo*, Mexico, 1986, pp 41-66; UNCTAD, *Impact of New and Emerging Technologies on Trade and Development. A review of the UNCTAD secretariat's research findings*, TD/B/C 6/L36, 14 August 1986, pp 12-15.

These new technologies are not developed in a social vacuum: their development is carried out on behalf of those social organisations which are able to command scientific and technological resources and apply them to solve the problems that they confront.³ For a long time the main objective of technological development has been a reduction in the amount of living labour used in production. This process has resulted in a decline in the proportion of total production costs accounted for by wages,⁴ so that companies have increasingly sought to reduce other cost items, including their raw material inputs, by using new technologies.

A trend towards producing similar products with less raw material has existed throughout history,⁵ though it has mostly been superseded by other developments. Our argument here is that the new technologies which are now emerging will make this trend far more important. This does not necessarily imply an absolute decline in the volume of raw material exports from developing countries (though this may be the case for a number of commodities). But it does mean that raw material consumption will not increase at the same rate as total manufacturing output. Since our argument applies to expected future developments, it necessarily remains somewhat speculative.

We are not simply repeating the argument that developed countries are entering a 'post-industrial society' in which services account for an ever-increasing share of gross national product (GNP) so that developing countries cannot expect raw material exports ever again to match overall world economic growth. Our argument goes a stage further: we maintain that even in manufacturing, with its declining share in the GNP of most industrialised countries, raw material intensity will be reduced.

These trends would hit developing countries at a time when a number of other trends also threaten their export potential. Since the second half of the 1970s, increasing *automation* of manufacturing has reduced the share of labour costs in total production costs to such an extent that multinational companies have become less eager to relocate produc-

³ See A J M Roobeck, 'Crisis in Fordism and the rise of a new technological paradigm', *Futures* 19 (2) 1987, pp 129-54; R van Tulder and G Junne, *European Multinationals in Core Technologies*, Chichester, England: Wiley, 1988, pp 1-27.

⁴ The share of direct labour cost in the total production costs of US industry declined from 25-30 per cent to 10-15 per cent during the twenty years up to 1984: S Nasar, 'Good news ahead for productivity', *Fortune*, 10 December 1984, pp 30-41.

⁵ For example, the use of raw materials per product unit in Japan fell by 40 per cent between 1973 and 1985, see B Kádár, 'External conditions of Hungarian industrial growth', *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 28 (108) winter 1987, p 62.

tage of this is that inventories, which in some companies reach a value of up to 30 per cent of total sales, can be cut down considerably in this way. Not only does this result in a single reduction in demand for raw materials, which afterwards would continue unchanged, but smaller inventories also mean that less stock gets spoiled in storage, and that less storage capacity is necessary. In many factories, more than one-third of the total space is needed for buffer stocks and inventories. Newly-built factories can be reduced in size accordingly. Thus, their construction will consume less raw materials.

The impact of biotechnology

Applications of biotechnology also lead to new products and new production processes. The biotechnology route which can be substituted for many petrochemical production processes is much less energy intensive, because fermentation processes normally take place at relatively low room temperatures and under normal pressure. This has far-reaching consequences for the equipment used: it will not be required to withstand high temperatures and pressures, and can therefore be made from thinner and less expensive materials.

Biotechnology also increases the scope for recycling and makes it possible to recover many materials, thus economising on metals, energy, and other materials.

Finally, biotechnology may in the future be used to construct completely new materials such as plastics or fibres, with the help of 'protein engineering'. These new materials, tailor-made for specific applications, could probably replace larger amounts of traditionally used materials, because each new material would already possess all the characteristics that otherwise could only be achieved by a combination of different materials.

The impact of new materials

The development of other new materials (without the help of biotechnology) works in the same direction. Advanced computers, powerful mathematical models and more precise analytical tools have enabled scientists to examine and control properties of materials as never before. By working at the molecular level, scientists can now create new materials for specific properties and uses rather than modify existing materials.⁸

⁸ R F Balazik and B W Klein, 'The challenge of new materials', *Materials and Society* 11 (2), 1987, pp 135-7.

New materials can more easily be tailor-made for specific applications. Since they can be formed and moulded more easily than conventional materials, their application can often drastically reduce the total number of parts used. A good example is provided by a helicopter manufacturer which reported 'savings in switching from metals to polymer composites. For one, there was a reduction of parts from 11,000 to 1,530. With composites, only 7,000 fasteners were used. Previously, the figure stood at a whopping 86,000. Finally, the weight dropped from 4,687 to 3,281 lbs (32 per cent)'.⁹

Significant quantities of metal (principally steel and aluminium) will be displaced from several major markets by new plastic materials over the next decade.¹⁰

The three 'core technologies' described above are not the only ones that contribute to a reduction of raw material consumption. Other technologies have a similar effect. An example is provided by the many process technologies such as the 'rapid heating' procedure of metals, which has the advantage of leading to a reduction of raw material consumption and to a reduction of scrap.¹¹

Demand development for specific materials

In order to analyse the impact of the applications of new technologies as described above, we selected the six most important non-food, non-energy export commodities of developing countries. These are given in the table opposite, in the order of their contribution to foreign exchange earnings of developing countries.

We have left out tropical wood, in spite of the fact that it would top the list of major export commodities (with exports from developing countries amounting to more than US\$ 5 billion in 1985). The reason for leaving lumber out of this analysis is that its substitution is not so much a question of the application of new technologies, but much more a replacement by other 'traditional' materials. It is remarkable that the three most important agricultural products (lumber, rubber and cotton) are together still much more important as export products for developing countries than all mineral raw materials combined. Below, we shall

⁹ *Iron Age*, January 1987, p 35.

¹⁰ Conclusion based on interviews which the US Bureau of Mines conducted with more than sixty scientists and other professionals engaged in materials development and sales. R F Balazik and B W Klein, 'The challenge of new materials', p 136.

¹¹ R van der Bill, 'Snelerhitten; methoden en toepassingen', *Metaal & Kunststof* 25 (6), 23 March 1987, p 52.

Table 1
World exports of major commodities
(in US\$ millions, 1985)

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>World exports</i>	<i>Share of LDCs (percentage)</i>	<i>Export of LDCs</i>
Iron	6988.4	41.8	2921.2
Rubber	2783.0	96.0	2672.0
Cotton	6092.3	42.7	2601.4
Copper	1787.9	64.3	1149.6
Phosphate	1576.9	60.4	952.4
Bauxite	931.8	83.0	773.4

Source: UNCTAD Commodity Yearbook 1987.

discuss the impact of new technologies upon the demand for the above mentioned commodities in the order of their importance.

Iron and steel

The iron and steel industry is a very good example of the trends that we have described.¹² The application of new production methods makes it possible to produce the same amount of steel with less iron ore. New sorts of steel have been developed which are stronger than traditional steel, with the result that less steel is needed to perform the same functions. New materials are developed which can replace steel. Recycling becomes better organised.

Better production methods

Continuous casting, which eliminates four phases of traditional production, is increasingly replacing other production methods. Not only is much less energy used (otherwise it is necessary to heat the iron/steel again), but also less iron ore, because additional material is lost during every production phase. It is estimated that conventional steel production incurs 10 per cent metal loss, whereas losses can be reduced to 2-4 per cent with continuous casting.¹³

New sorts of steel

The development of steel substitutes has stimulated the development of new steel varieties, such as 'high strength low alloy' (HSLA) steel.¹⁴ It is

¹² UNCTAD, *Impact of Structural and Technological Changes in the Iron Ore Market*, report by the secretariat, TD/B/IPC/IRON ORE/AC 1/5, 8 August 1986.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p 9.

¹⁴ HSLA steel varieties are alloys of steel with small quantities of metals such as vanadium, niobium or titanium, see UNIDO, *Advanced materials technology monitor*, November 1983.

stronger than conventional steel and can therefore be rolled thinner, suggesting that iron ore consumption per unit of output (with the same properties) will be reduced. New high performance sheet steels used today have around three times the strength of steels used ten years ago. The use of these new sorts leads to lighter, thinner and stronger products and to a reduction in steel consumption in practically all sectors. While special steels used to represent only about 10 per cent of total steel production, they now account for about 50 per cent, and the trend points in the direction of a further increase of this share.¹⁵

Dematerialisation by product substitution

Fibre-reinforced plastics can replace steel in the automobile industry and in construction. In the first instance, this would be a process of substitution, not of 'dematerialisation'. One material is replaced by another. Plastics, however, do not rust and may therefore be used for longer. In addition, small quantities of plastics can fulfil the same functions as larger amounts of steel: 'in a typical car industry, for instance, it was estimated that 80 kg of steel could be replaced by about 11 kg of plastics.'¹⁶ However, plastics are much more difficult to recycle than iron and steel, and this is a significant disadvantage since at present almost 70 per cent of the total weight of automobiles actually gets recycled.¹⁷

New ceramic materials could replace steel as the raw material for heat-resistant parts (in the engines of cars and the turbines of aircraft engines). They are stainless, wear-resistant, and increase energy efficiency considerably by making higher working temperatures possible. A disadvantage is still their brittleness. Recently, however, ceramic material has been developed with better plastic properties.¹⁸ In construction, polymer reinforced concrete is lighter and more durable than steel reinforced concrete and is already used for the construction of tunnels and for canalisation.¹⁹

Improved recycling

Scrap becomes a more and more important raw material for steel production. The development of the 'electric furnace' which is fed almost exclusively with scrap greatly stimulated this trend. It is estimated that,

¹⁵ UNCTAD, TD/B/IPC/IRON ORE/AC 1/5, 1986, p 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ UNIDO, April 1986, p 1.

¹⁸ NRC *Handelsblad*, 29 March 1988.

¹⁹ UNIDO, April 1986, p 20

by 1990, electric furnaces will account for 38 per cent of world steel production (compared with 31 per cent in 1983).²⁰

The decline in the demand for steel directly affects the demand for manganese, which is almost exclusively used in steelmaking. But the decrease in the demand for manganese may go even further than that in the demand for steel, because new steelmaking processes make it possible to reduce the amount of manganese ore without changing the properties of the steel: 'greater use of the electric arc furnace, continuous casting, oxygen converting in bottom-blown vessels, and external desulfurisation all tend to decrease unit consumption of manganese in steelmaking'.²¹ The working document of the European Commission on 'General Objectives Steel 1990' projects a decline in manganese consumption in ironmaking and steelmaking. The use of manganese ore in iron blast furnaces is expected to end in the near future: 'In the United States, the amount of manganese used per ton of steel produced has decreased fairly rapidly within the past few years, by about one-fifth. Changes in steelmaking technology, especially use of combined or bottom blowing, have reduced unit consumption of manganese ferroalloys, particularly for high-carbon ferromanganese.'²² As a result of these changes, the demand for manganese forecast by the US Bureau of Mines for both the USA and the world as a whole is now lower than it has been previously.²³

In the long run the blow to manganese ore exporting countries (mainly Gabon and Brazil among the developing countries) may not come from the decrease of manganese used in steel production, but from the processing of ocean manganese nodules. This, however, may still be some way in the future. The US Bureau of Mines concluded that 'for the foreseeable future, significant financial incentives would be required to make nodule mining and processing economically attractive'.²⁴

²⁰ US Bureau of Mines, *Mineral Facts and Problems*, 1985, p 401. The world consumption of scrap in 1985 was 260 million tons, as opposed to a steel production of 720 million tons: International Iron and Steel Institute 1987: in H W Maul, *Strategische Rohstoffe. Risiken für die wirtschaftliche Sicherheit des Westens*, Schriften des Forschungsinstituts der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988, p 73.

²¹ US Bureau of Mines, *Mineral Facts and Problems*, 1985, p 497.

²² Cited in US Bureau of Mines, *Minerals Yearbook*, 1985, p 678.

²³ 'For the US, the forecast assumed that the lower manganese requirements achieved as of 1983 would decline about 5 per cent further by 2000. For the rest of the world, the forecast assumes that the historical relationship between manganese demand and raw steel production would show a decrease from the 1983 ratio of about 5 per cent by 1990 and about 10 per cent by 2000', US Bureau of Mines, *Mineral Facts and Problems*, 1985, p 496.

²⁴ C T Hillman and B B Gosling, *Mining Deep Ocean Manganese Nodules. Description and Economic Analysis of a Potential Venture*, US Bureau of Mines, IC 9015, 1985, cited in US Bureau of Mines, *Minerals Yearbook*, 1985, p 681.

Rubber

It is difficult to find examples of a 'dematerialisation of production' that would affect natural rubber. While natural rubber has faced some competition from more than twenty types of synthetic rubbers ever since World War I, 'the processing and mechanical quality of natural rubber . . . remains unsurpassed'. In spite of the increasing use of synthetic rubber, demand for natural rubber has also increased, mainly because of the rapid expansion of motorisation: without rubber, 'present patterns of personal and cargo transport would be impossible'. Tyres account for about 65 per cent of total rubber consumption.²⁵

Cotton

The demand for cotton could increase as a result of a return in consumer preference to natural fibres in the industrialised countries. Cotton may face competition from other natural fibres that used to be very expensive but which may decline considerably in price as a result of industrial production. For example, scientists of the Southern California biotech company, Syntro, have succeeded in isolating the gene coding for the production of silk fibres by silk spinners, and in implanting the gene into bacteria that now produce this fibre in an industrial fermentation process. They are experimenting with small variations of this natural protein in order to arrive at new varieties of the fibre that would make it even better to wear and to process.²⁶

Copper

Copper has many end-uses, but hardly any for which no substitutes are available. In many cases, substitution also involves a kind of 'dematerialisation'.

An important substitute for the copper wires used in telecommunications is provided by optical fibres.²⁷ They are still rather expensive, but production costs are coming down rapidly. A thin optical fibre can transport as much information as much thicker copper coaxial wires; and the difference between the two means is still increasing, because techniques to pack data in such a way that more information can

²⁵ S C Teo and V A Coveney, 'Engineering uses of rubber', *Metals and Materials*, November 1987, p 671.

²⁶ The research was largely financed by the US navy which hopes to discover an optimal material for parachutes as a result of the project; 'Haute couture aus dem Bioreaktor', *Bild der Wissenschaft* 25 (1), January 1988, p 15.

²⁷ US Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, *Potential Impact of Fiber Optics on Copper Consumption*, Washington DC, April 1984.

be transmitted along the same optical fibre cable are developing rapidly. At a later stage, some of the optical fibre cables may become unnecessary, as they may be replaced by local microwave emissions.²⁸ The use of copper in telecommunications (about 10 per cent of world copper consumption) is more important than its use in power transmission, at least in the USA.²⁹ In this field, superconductors may eventually become a major threat to the position of copper.³⁰

Copper, like steel, is also a victim of miniaturisation. 'Due to miniaturisation and a lower copper content per square inch, it is forecast that circuit boards in the early 1990s may use only 5 per cent of the copper contained in boards made during 1980 to 1985. Even though the total number of printed circuit boards will grow, overall copper requirements will show a substantial decrease.'³¹

Phosphate

Phosphate is mainly used for three purposes: production of fertilisers, soaps and detergents, and ammunition. There are strong trends to reduce the use of phosphate in at least two of these areas: fertilisers (about 85 per cent of world phosphate rock production)³² and washing powder. This is only partly for technological reasons and has mainly been enforced by environmental concerns in overdeveloped countries. This pressure stimulates the development of alternative technologies. 'The passage of local laws to restrict the level of phosphorus in household laundry detergents, combined with a general reduction in the phosphorus content of these products, has been the major reason for the decline in the demand for elemental phosphorus.'³³

Applications of biotechnology may help to reduce fertiliser consumption. Enzyme technology is already used to reduce the phosphate content of washing powder.

²⁸ This, at least, is feared by the British Ministry of Trade and Industry. *Telecombrief* 8 (13), 8 July 1988, pp 141, 143.

²⁹ R M Valdes, 'Substitution in the insulated cable market: a study of copper-aluminium materials substitution', *Materials and Society*, 11(3), 1987, p 261.

³⁰ *Financial Times*, 7 February 1988. This, however, will not take place in the near future. See G Bylinsky, 'Technology in the year 2000', *Fortune* 118 (2), 18 July 1988, p 70.

³¹ UNCTAD, *Technological Change and its Implications for Some Latin American Export Commodities: A background note*, 3402c/3416c, May 1986, p 36.

³² UNESCO, Committee on Natural Resources, *Mineral resources: new sources of phosphate rock and potash, particularly low-grade deposits*, report of the Secretary-General, E/C 7/1983/2 8 March 1983, p 3. UNCTAD, Trade and Development Board, *Consideration of international measures on phosphates*, report prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat in collaboration with the FAO secretariat, TD/B/1PC/Phosphates/2, 31 October 1977, p 2.

³³ US Bureau of Mines, *Mineral Facts and Problems*, 1985, p 590.

Bauxite and aluminium

Aluminium is one of the success stories of increasing consumption and exports during the last few decades. For a long time, aluminium was not so much regarded as a target of substitution, but as the new material that replaced other metals (especially steel and copper). This, however, has changed.

Aluminium consumption is expected to fall 1.7 per cent in 1988 from the 1987 level. The resulting drop in prices is regarded as essential by observers of the market, in order to avoid the loss of more markets to plastics. Once lost, it is very difficult to regain them later. According to the same source, 'investment in new aluminium production capacity remains surprisingly low in view of the fact that the industry has been working at about 95 per cent of capacity' in 1988. A possible explanation offered in the same report is that aluminium producers perhaps 'expect aluminium's loss of market share to the plastics to be very severe, making new capacity unnecessary'.³⁴

One of the major consumers of aluminium is the aerospace industry. Actually, many aluminium aeroplane components can be produced with less aluminium because of improved production techniques. New alloys have been developed which are much stronger than conventional forms of aluminium, and for which much less aluminium is needed. Besides, large parts which conventionally were assembled from a large number of components can now be cast in one piece (for example, the fuel tank of a rocket). As a result, much less raw material is wasted than before.³⁵ Aluminium is still the most important material (81 per cent of total weight) for aircraft construction, but new composite materials and new forms of construction that make more use of adhesives have helped to economise on more than ten tons of the total weight of a Boeing 747.³⁶ If no new developments take place in this field, however, most of the aluminium will be replaced by 1995 by composite materials (65 per cent of the total mass as opposed to 11 per cent left for aluminium). But with new aluminium alloys, aluminium may still be good for 51 per cent of the mass of material used in aircraft construction by 1995.³⁷

The above survey shows that the application of new technology especially affects the demand for minerals. The demand for the two agri-

³⁴ *Aluminium Analysis*, London: Bird Associates, 1988, cited in *Financial Times*, 22 July 1988.

³⁵ A Kleppe, 'Dunwandig zandgietswerk van aluminium', *Metaal & Kunststof*, 25 (8), 21 April 1987, p 37.

³⁶ 'Kleben statt schrauben', *highTech* 1(1), 1987, p 95.

³⁷ A Kleppe, 'Trends en ontwikkelingen in de aluminiumtechnologie', *Metaal & Kunststof*, 25 (3), 9 February 1987, p 28.

cultural commodities included in this survey, rubber and cotton, will probably not change as much as the demand for mineral raw materials as a result of applications of new technologies.

Impact on individual developing countries

It is difficult to estimate the impact of these trends on the exports of specific developing countries. First, the technological developments described only constitute one factor among many which determine demand, such as economic growth and the resulting demand for raw materials, the decisions of multinational corporations on the structure of their internal division of labour, political decisions to stockpile specific raw materials or release others, the acceptance of phosphate in washing powder by consumers, and the strength of the environment movement.

Even if the overall development of the demand for specific raw materials could be specified, it is uncertain how a potential reduction would be spread over the different countries of production. It is highly improbable that a reduction of exports of the commodity in question would take place equally in all producing countries. Instead, an unequal distribution of the cuts can be expected. The share of any individual country could depend on considerations such as the quality of its material, its accessibility, the market power of main producers, their comparative productivity and the resulting cost level, the degree of processing of the raw material producers and the distribution of the processing capacity around the globe, and exchange rate movements.

Below, we differentiate between those producers that have a large world market share (and, consequently, can influence the market to some degree) and those that do not. Most countries belonging to the first group also possess a certain processing capacity, so that they are able to supply more customers directly and do not depend on the processing of others who will try to get their raw materials from the cheapest source possible. In table 2 we provide, for four raw materials, an example of one country for both groups.

A clearcut example for the first group is Chile, which was able to keep up its earnings from copper exports during the period of low world market prices (1981–1985) by aggressively expanding the volume of exports, largely at the cost of copper producers in the USA, but also of copper exports from Zambia. Chilean copper had the advantage of a high copper content in the ore, but could also thrive because of the

Table 2
Raw material exports of selected developing countries
(1985)

<i>Product</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Share of product in country's total exports (percentage)</i>	<i>Share of country in value of world export of product (percentage)</i>
Bauxite	Guinea	85.7	41.9
	Guyana	46.5	10.7
Copper	Chile	46.3	24.2
	Zambia	90.6	9.9
Iron Ore	Brazil	6.5	23.7
	Liberia	64.9	4.0
Phosphate	Morocco	22.4	30.4
	Togo	37.9	5.9

Sources: UNCTAD, *Commodity Yearbook 1987*, TD/B/C 1/STAT 4, 1988; and UNCTAD, *Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics*, Supplement 1987, TD/STAT 15, 1988.

benevolent conditions created by the military regime for the state corporation CEDELCO.³⁸

Brazil, by far the largest iron ore exporter in the world, still has extended deposits with a high iron content in the Amazon region. Importers would probably be reluctant to cut back their trade with a supplier that holds the most promising deposits for the future. Morocco, similarly, would probably not be the most prominent victim of an eventual decline in the demand for phosphate, because of the country's strong market position.

The second group is formed by countries like Guyana (producing bauxite), Zambia (copper), Liberia (iron ore) or Togo (phosphate). These countries, with a high share of their major export commodities in total exports, are extremely vulnerable. They are in a weak position, since they have a much smaller share of the world market than their competitors. In a situation in which competition between different producing countries increases as a result of the spiralling debt burden and strong pressures to increase exports, the smaller producers who cannot promote sales in the same way as the larger ones may find themselves in increasing difficulties.

³⁸ C. Fortin, 'Chilean copper policy: international and internal aspects', *IDS Bulletin*, 17 (4), October 1986, pp 57-64.

Consequently, production cuts made as a result of a shrinking demand will not be distributed equally throughout all producing countries. It would be interesting to analyse the historical distribution of cuts in the past in order to identify those countries that will have to shoulder the heaviest burden.

The 'dematerialisation of production' can lead to an important reduction in the demand for raw materials, especially minerals. However, there is no tendency without a counter-tendency. In the present case, two counter-tendencies might occur: with a decline in prices, new market outlets may be found (such as non-steel uses of iron ore and new applications of copper); and although raw material consumption in the highly industrialised countries may decline, an increase in raw material consumption in the developing countries, with their rapidly expanding populations, can be expected.³⁹ A serious problem, however, is that many developing countries lack the foreign exchange necessary to pay for the amount of imports that they need. The chances that their demand would compensate for an eventual decrease in demand from developed countries, therefore, can only be seen as slight.

Of course overall demand depends on many factors, such as overall economic growth. However, the core of our argument has been that raw material exports are no longer as closely linked to the expansion of world manufacturing production as they used to be. As this increases the competition between developing countries which export raw material, it will become more difficult to coordinate the reactions of such countries to this development, and consequently it could become even more difficult to formulate commodity agreements.

The speed at which these changes will take place is uncertain and will depend, among other factors, on the development of prices of competing materials. Ironically, any increase in demand and the resulting higher prices for the traditional raw materials will also speed up the process of dematerialisation and substitution.

³⁹ The developing countries' share of the world consumption of market economies rose by 6 to 7 per cent in the ten years from 1977 for each of the six major metals: copper, aluminium, lead, zinc, nickel and tin. In each case, however, between half and three-quarters of developing world consumption is concentrated in five countries: India, South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil and Mexico. See *World Commodity Outlook 1989: industrial raw materials*, London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1988, cited in *Financial Times*, 25 November 1988.

The role of the intellectual in China

'The world is my responsibility'

This saying of the great Chinese sage, Confucius (551-478 BC), represented the traditional aspirations of Chinese intellectuals, who took it as a guiding principle for their way in life. In the past, the career of a learned man consisted in serving the state as an imperial administrator. To quote again from Confucius, the primary duties of a scholar were 'first to cultivate himself morally and intellectually as a gentleman, then to keep his house in good order as a sound unit of society, then, using this as a starting point, to administer the state and finally to bring about general concord in the world'.

'The world' meant China, the Middle Kingdom 'situated between heaven and earth', inaccessibly surrounded by oceans, mountains and deserts, a universe by itself. The minorities living in the outer regions, generally described as barbarians, would become citizens of the 'celestial empire' by assimilating Chinese culture. The intellectual was expected to edify and rule the people on behalf of the emperor according to the principles laid down by Confucius. This made him as much a politician as an intellectual, as was indeed the ultimate goal of his life.

Politics is, however, more complex than Confucianism. It is a profession and an art involving practices which are both moral and immoral. A conscientious Confucian scholar inevitably found his artistic and political missions in conflict. Almost as a rule, he would fall out of favour with 'the son of heaven', the emperor, and be expelled from the court and exiled to China's remotest regions, amidst the 'barbarians'. Often, in his exile, he began to mingle with the commonfolk and took to writing to express his keenly felt experiences in life, eventually becoming a great prose writer or poet. This was the case with the great essayist, Han Yu (768-824), and the well-known poet, Du Fu (712-770), of the Tang dynasty, famous in Chinese history as a glorious period of letters and arts. Even under these adverse circumstances the writer's work would often be tinged with deep regret and sorrow for his failure to discharge his responsibility towards the world.

This world began to undergo a drastic change as it stepped into modern history. The door of the secluded empire was first broken open with modern gunboats, during the so-called Opium War with the British (1840-42). The emperor was at a loss before the new weaponry on the open seas, and suffered a sad defeat. He was obliged to pay the victor huge indemnities, to cede to it

* The UK publications of Chun-Chan Yeh's novels, *The Mountain Village* (1988) and *The Open Fields* (1988) are reviewed on pp 189-92 of this issue of *Third World Quarterly*.

territories such as Hong Kong, to grant a host of privileges detrimental to national sovereignty, and to open many seacoast and inland ports as trading centres. The defeat and its consequences shocked the intellectuals. They began to realise that their concept of the world was outdated, and had to adjust their sense of responsibility accordingly. At that time a young scholar by the name of Yan Fu (1853–1921) went to England to study modern navies, ‘the secret of British strength’. After a year of observation and hard thinking, he decided to give up his original plan, and devoted himself instead to the translation of such books as *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, *L'Esprit de Lois* by Montesquieu, and *Evolution and Ethics and other essays* by Thomas Huxley. He thought his responsibility lay in introducing to China those ideas that had made Western countries strong and prosperous. This was the first attempt at modernisation in China.

A group of intellectuals, Kang Youwei (1858–1929), Tan Sitong (1865–97) and Liang Qichao (1871–1929), all close to the young Guangxu Emperor (1871–1908), then attempted to persuade the sovereign to institute political reforms converting China from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy, like that of Britain. The Empress Dowager got wind of the conspiracy. She immediately decreed the beheading of Tan Sitong in the public square before the royal palace and placed the young emperor under permanent arrest. The other two scholars managed to save their skins by escaping to Japan. The obstinacy and reluctance of the Dowager Empress in facing the needs of the time invited more foreign invasions. France, Germany and even Japan followed the British in demanding territorial concessions and privileges. China had been reduced to the status of a colony. The Empress Dowager finally agreed with her ministers that Western science and technology were essential to transform China into a power to be reckoned with.

The court was vehement that modern science and technology must not threaten the imperial political system and its feudal institutions. So the textile mills and ordinance factories set up with imported equipment, were still managed by a moribund and feudal bureaucracy characterised by corruption, ignorance and even superstition. These enterprises soon went bankrupt.

The Dowager Empress then searched for other antidotes to foreign invasion. It occurred to her that the traditional Boxers professed to a supernatural immunity from gunfire and swords once they had swallowed the magic talismans issued by their sect leaders before combat. With her acquiescence, the Boxers launched a surprise attack in 1900 on all foreigners and their institutions in the capital, with the result that eight powers, including Japan, joined in an alliance and stormed Peking. The Dowager Empress and her retinue fled to the farthestmost western town of Xi'an. The peace treaty, subsequently concluded with the foreign powers, stipulated yet more concessions of territories and privileges to the various victors with an indemnity of four hundred million silver *tales*; in other words, one *tales* from each of the entire Chinese population.

On top of that, China was to surrender the administration of her key revenue sources, such as the customs, postal service and salt monopoly, to the eight powers.

At this point Sun Yatsen (1867–1925) appeared on the scene. He was a young intellectual with both traditional Chinese and Western training, a medical doctor by profession. But his interpretation of responsibility to the world urged him to give up his professional practice and to devote himself to bringing about a revolution aimed at ending the monarchy and replacing it with a republic. It was an audacious attempt, but it attracted zealous support from the intellectuals, most of whom were accomplished Confucian scholars. After years of struggle, in 1911 Sun Yatsen eventually achieved his purpose in establishing the hoped-for republic, and was elected its first president. But being an intellectual, he was no master of the art of politics. The fruit of the revolution was usurped by careerist politicians and military lords whose struggle for power plunged the country into a series of civil wars.

During the First World War, China was on the side of the Allies, but the Versailles treaty ruled that all the former territories and privileges wrested from China by Germany before the war, rather than being restored to China, should be transferred to Japan. China was treated as a defeated, enemy country. The news reached Beijing and immediately roused the intellectuals to action. The professors and students in the capital staged massive demonstrations of protest. Soon the entire intelligentsia throughout the country was up in arms, demanding thorough reforms in politics and culture under the slogans of 'democracy' and 'science' for the country. These demands were in direct opposition to the teachings of Confucius, which they now regarded as shackles on the mind of the people, and the very basis for the corrupt, incompetent rule of the existing government. Paradoxically, though, their attack on the so-called feudal philosophy of Confucius originated from that sense of responsibility to the world derived precisely from the precept set by the 'feudal master' for the conduct of the intellectuals.

The Communist Party and the intellectual

In 1921, a small group of highly accomplished scholars (one of whom, Dong Biwu, had passed the first imperial examination of the last dynasty in preparation for service to the monarchical government but who was to become the vice-president of the People's Republic) founded the Communist Party of China. This inaugurated a new era in modern Chinese history. The communist movement began to spread, first among the intellectuals and then among the workers and peasants. It became so influential that Sun Yatsen, who had failed to realise his republican ideals, had to seek the cooperation of the communists in the form of a united front. They jointly started a northern expedition and succeeded in wiping out the bureaucrats and military lords, thereby ending the

civil wars. During the campaign, Chiang Kaishek, who claimed to be the successor of Sun Yatsen, emerged as the national leader and supreme commander of the army. He soon split the united front and turned his guns against the communists. A new series of civil wars ensued, further debilitating the country. This turmoil gave the Japanese militarists an opportunity to realise their long-cherished dream of conquering China.

The Japanese invaded the country in 1931. Engrossed in establishing his personal supremacy in the land, Chiang Kaishek was reluctant to gamble his forces in a confrontation with the well-equipped Japanese army. While in continuous retreat before the advance of the Japanese troops, he continued combating the communists, who vainly appealed to him to end the civil war so that they could fight together against the invaders. Profiting from the situation, the Japanese army pushed relentlessly into the vicinity of Beijing without meeting any resistance. It was again the professors and students in the ancient capital who took to the streets to protest against the civil war and to call upon the people to unite and resist the invaders. The response was nationwide in the form of more intensive demonstrations and protests. Even Chiang Kaishek's own troops were affected by the display of patriotism and refused to take part in the internecine battles. For the second time, Chiang Kaishek had to come to terms with the communists in the form of a new united front. Thus, the national war of resistance against Japan was formally declared when the Japanese attacked Marco Polo Bridge, a strategic point on the outskirts of Beijing, on 7 July 1937. This was a national war against a country which had formed an alliance with the Axis powers: Italy and Germany. The fighting persisted till the unconditional capitulation of Japan on 15 August 1945.

The victory rekindled Chiang Kaishek's ambition to establish his supremacy in the country. Talks for a united government with communist participation failed, ending in a renewed outbreak of civil wars, which proved much more fierce and destructive, as Chiang Kaishek now had supplies of modern weaponry from abroad. This was more than the impoverished people could endure. Among the intellectuals, even such a highly respected academic and poet as Wen Yiduo (1899-1946), accomplished in both Chinese classics and Western learning, protested openly against Chiang Kaishek's rule. He was assassinated by Chiang's agent while addressing a mass meeting in Kunming. His death served as a powerful call from the intelligentsia to the people to demolish Chiang's rule. Having lost the support of the people, Chiang Kaishek's superior military equipment also lost its effectiveness. He was finally ousted by the communist forces and had to flee to Taiwan under the protection of the US Seventh Fleet. The People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged as a reality on 1 October 1949, bringing with it great promise for the people, and for the intellectuals in particular.

As a popular Chinese saying goes, 'if a scholar tries to start a rebellion, he may endeavour for three years, but still he will not get anywhere'. Though

intellectuals cannot accomplish much in the struggle for power, as the educated and enlightened, they possess great capabilities. They can play a vital, sometimes key role in times of national crisis as well as in times of rehabilitation and peace. They occupy a unique position in a country such as China, where the peasantry forms the overwhelming majority of the population.

Post-revolutionary contradictions

The primary task of the Chinese revolution, as Mao Zedong constantly pointed out, was to remove the three big mountains that had weighed heavily on the Chinese people: the corrupt Kuomintang or Nationalist Party government (of which Chiang Kaishek was the leader), traditional feudalism and international imperialism; or, expressed theoretically, to solve the contradiction between the Chinese people and the three re-actionary forces. The very emergence of the PRC marked the final settlement of the problem, now that the country was unified, and freed from foreign interference, with all the humiliations and indignities of the past cast into the dustbin of history. The country was to forge ahead with peaceful reconstruction. The intellectuals in particular looked upon the people's government as a promise for the fulfilment of their responsibility towards the world. They were prepared to serve it devotedly and whole-heartedly. It was a unique situation in a country where a drastic ideological and political change had taken place.

But social development, again to quote from Mao Zedong, is motivated by contradictions, the solution of which spells great strides for progress. The contradiction is the norm, so to speak, while equilibrium is only temporary. In other words, society would lose its dynamism and become stagnant without intermittent revolutions or, in the case of China, without political movements which could at times be violent. With the three past contradictions liquidated, Mao stated, a new contradiction had arisen: 'the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie'.

Yet, with the land collectivised and private enterprises and capital communised in the early days of the new era, the bourgeoisie had to be sought elsewhere than among land owners and capitalists: it was found in the ideology of the intellectuals. Their outlook could not be proletarian, first because they could not for the most part have been educated without having been born to well-to-do families; then because the kind of education they had received in the old society could not have been other than bourgeois or even feudal. They had therefore to be reformed in order to serve the proletariat properly. Ideological remoulding, then, was the right solution for the new contradiction. In the circumstances, however, the contradiction was not considered hostile, since most of the intellectuals had been ardent supporters of the revolution. The problem was to be settled peacefully, by re-education through the intensive and systematic study of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought, coupled with emotional transformation through living and working among peasants and

workers. Anxious to serve the new state, the intelligentsia as a whole were largely willing to go through this process and in good faith, too.

But the process was long-drawn out and did not necessarily work well with certain types of individuals, particularly among the literati. Hu Feng was a case in point. He had been a well-known left-wing writer, poet, critic and editor, very active in the 1930s and 1940s. A close associate of Lu Xun (1881–1936), the founder of modern Chinese literature, he commanded prestige among the progressive men of letters as a rebellious figure, pitted against the established order of Chiang Kaishek. He doubted the need for a writer to acquire the correct ideology, by immersing himself in the labouring masses, in order to produce great works of art. He argued that the subjective will of the writer himself played an active part in his creative endeavours. He was consequently a critic of the cultural policies of the party. He committed his views to a memorandum of over 100,000 words and presented it to Mao Zedong. After careful examination, the document was found to be an open challenge to the party, and subversive in essence. Further investigation of the author's personal history confirmed to the investigators that he was an inveterate bourgeois intellectual and counter-revolutionary, seeking to topple the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was arrested in 1953 and not rehabilitated until 1983, after a full three decades in custody. The case was repeated with many other writers and artists.

The episode proved how arduous was the task of ideological remoulding and how great the rigour exercised in carrying it out. Four years passed, with increasing intensification of re-education. Then in 1957 a chance arose to test the efficacy of the endeavour when the party started a Rectification Campaign for the purpose of correcting the shortcomings of the party rank-and-file. Comments and suggestions on the party were invited. Intellectuals, including those in the party, aired their views at meetings held for the purpose, or in the press. The campaign continued for about three months, with the comments including criticisms of the party itself. This criticism aroused the suspicion of the party leadership and after being examined was found to be malicious, with the hidden intention of denigrating and discrediting the party. Its objective was quite clear: the restoration of capitalism in the land. It was a serious ideological development, and a sure proof of the existence of the bourgeoisie at work, not only among intellectuals outside the party, but also within it. These bourgeois elements, however, had not yet reached the status of class enemies, and did not therefore need to be treated as such. Yet they had to be set apart from the ranks of the people. They were singled out under the label of 'rightists' so that their remoulding could be intensified under public supervision. The intellectuals involved numbered about a quarter of a million.

The Cultural Revolution

The over-emphasis on the existence of the bourgeoisie and its influence in the country led a handful of careerists inside the party to assume that there also existed a section of bourgeois conspirators in the party leadership, which had ramifications throughout the country. They had, no doubt, to be eradicated, and the way to achieve this end was to launch a nation-wide campaign known as the Cultural Revolution.

Lin Biao (1907–71), the then Minister of National Defence, and the 'Gang of Four'—three pseudo-intellectuals, Jiang Qing, Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao and half-illiterate Wang Hongwen, originally a factory worker—banded together to form the directing nucleus of the 'revolution'. Conforming to general practice, this new, unprecedentedly large, political movement was first set in motion in literary circles. It began with criticism of a series of essays published in the *Beijing Evening Post* by three writers under the common pseudonym 'Three Family Village', and a historical play, *Hairui Dismissed from His Post*, by the well-known professor of history, Wu Han (1909–69). The movement then spread all over the country via school teenagers known as Red Guards, who were extolled as ideologically unpolluted and encouraged to act as vanguards in defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of Mao Zedong. The popular investigations conducted on intellectuals, and people of standing inside and outside the party, established that even the President of the Republic, Liu Shaoqi, was an arch-bourgeois, 'a renegade, enemy agent and scab'. So the bourgeoisie, it seemed, had penetrated into the headquarters of the proletariat. Ideological re-education, therefore, had to be extended to government and party leaders. In 1969, a great exodus of officials and intellectuals to the countryside for 'long-term ideological remoulding' among the peasants began to take place. Even the erstwhile Red Guards were not exempt, for they, after all, had gone to schools staffed by bourgeois teachers. They could not have escaped spiritual contamination.

Further exploration of the extensive infiltration of bourgeois ideas into the country led the Gang of Four to develop a new theory that the basic root of evil was 'knowledge' or 'learning' pursued by intellectuals, who devoted themselves to detached studies and were out of touch with the labouring people. That was why they tended to be metaphysical and idealistic, prone to be captivated by bourgeois ideology and in turn to become preachers of capitalism who contaminated the whole society. Such being the case, their social status must be redefined, so that people could be on their guard against pollution.

Thus, from the edifiers of the people, the intellectuals fell to the position of the 'stinking ninth' category in the social strata, the other eight types above them being big landowners, kulaks, counter-revolutionaries, thugs, rightists, capitalist-roaders, renegades and spies. The debasement of the intelligentsia had another corollary for the Gang of Four: universities and other institutions of

higher learning were found to be a breeding ground for harmful ideas and undesirables, and had therefore to cease functioning. Only faculties of technology and useful arts might be preserved, but must be placed under the supervision and direction of the proletariat, in the form of worker-commissars sent by factories. This scheme was enacted during the last years of the Cultural Revolution. All teaching staff were put under the surveillance of worker-commissars who, as often as not, were half-educated.

This example alone is enough to prove the absolute absurdity of the Cultural Revolution, which brought the country to the brink of a general breakdown. The Communist Party of China, on which Chinese intellectuals as well as the people had pinned their hopes for the salvation of the country, and which had indeed led the nation out of perdition, could certainly not allow the situation to develop unchecked. Barely a month after the death of Mao Zedong, it took prompt action to end the anti-cultural movement by arresting, in September 1976, the Gang of Four.

China turned a new page in its contemporary history. But the new page was not without blemishes: the national economy was on the verge of total collapse, political life was greatly disrupted, thousands upon thousands of innocent people had been incriminated by framed-up cases, living standards fell abruptly, intellectuals - the 'stinking ninth'—were reduced to inaction, worst of all, 'knowledge' was condemned as the root of all evils, and this verdict was propagated widely at a time when the rest of the world was making rapid progress in scientific, cultural and economic development. It required gigantic efforts to restore order and then to embark on catching up with the times.

'Knowledge is power'

In the early 1950s, this was the title of a Soviet magazine. When the Sino-Soviet relationship was close the periodical had a Chinese edition translated and published in Beijing, but after the controversy over ideological issues broke out between the two countries, the publication ceased and the title, which had become a proverbial phrase, went out of usage. After the downfall of the Gang of Four, the third plenary session of the eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China convened in December 1978 and appealed to the nation to start a New Long March: it entailed the modernisation of a country sadly devastated by the Cultural Revolution, and primarily the modernisation of industry, agriculture, national defence and science and technology. Knowledge began to be regarded as vital to the new drive. The above phrase regained its currency, but with a much broader connotation. The definition of knowledge widened in scope, extending from higher learning to industrial and business management and foreign trade. And the interpretation of the word 'intellectual' ranged from academics to civil engineers.

Owing, however, to the negation of knowledge and the persecution of the

learned during the Cultural Revolution, the public lost interest in learning, believing that knowledge did more harm than good. Most of the intellectuals themselves also drew the conclusion, for the first time in Chinese history, that they were superfluous to society, and that their old sense of responsibility to the world was an anachronism, if not a mockery. This attitude was, of course, fatal to the drive for modernisation which needed knowledge, and up-to-date knowledge, at that, and in which intellectuals had to play a vital role. The party was conscious of the problem, and took prompt measures to remedy the situation, stressing that knowledge must be respected, that intellectuals were worthy citizens of the country and that the derogatory epithets showered on them during the past political movements were erroneous and unfair, and must be cast into oblivion. Yet rehabilitation was also so prompt that intellectuals themselves found it hard to accept the change. Fears and misgivings made them wonder whether this was a mere expediency to calm them before the arrival of new political storms.

The party then took the further step of declaring that intellectuals were not a section of people apart, but were members of the working class, an integral part of the proletariat; they differed from workers and peasants only through the division of labour, though they also worked for socialism. The implication of the word 'labour' was also amplified to include mental work. It was then further elucidated that mental productivity in modern times could be much higher than that accomplished by sheer physical labour. This had indeed been proved by the progress made in the developed and developing countries during the short space of the past ten years when China had been engaged in its Cultural Revolution. Such being the case, there was no reason why intellectuals could not join the vanguard of the proletariat, the Communist Party. The party opened its door to them, and many of them were admitted during the early 1980s. All these developments helped to convince intellectuals of the importance the party attached to them and to the role they could play in the rehabilitation and modernisation of the land. History required them to forego all their misgivings, and, as they did so, their sense of responsibility to the world was revitalised. They were ready to give full play to their initiative and talents for the good of the nation. A time of great expectations had arrived, 'the spring of the intellects', so to speak.

This spring of the intellects was, however, nothing new. It had occurred, although only briefly, as far back as 1956, six years after the establishment of the PRC. Great efforts had been made to raise productivity in agriculture and industry, and the living standards of the people had risen. For over a century the country had never experienced such peace, stability and well-being. On the strength of this preliminary prosperity, the party decided to make a similar advance in culture and science by announcing a policy of the 'two hundreds': 'Let a hundred schools of thoughts contend and a hundred flowers bloom.' This was the phrase used by historians to describe the so-called golden period

of Chinese literature and philosophy during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770–256 BC). 'A hundred' in idiomatic Chinese means 'numerous' and 'various', 'thoughts' connote all branches of philosophy and thinking, while 'flowers' indicate 'all types of literature and art'. The intellectuals had warmly welcomed this policy with high hopes. Yet, before long, the afore-mentioned party Rectification Campaign took place during which the status of intellectuals fell, and 'the spring of the intellects' vanished without a trace.

The lesson was grim and the consequences disastrous. A general abhorrence of the horrifying and tragic events of the immediate past among the people as well as in the party generated in the hearts of the intellectuals the hope that this time 'the spring' would live. Indeed, they made every effort to ensure that it did so, particularly writers and artists. Literary journals sprang up one after another; old and middle-aged writers, who had been silent and disdainful, took up their pens again, and a host of young writers came to the fore. They considered it their responsibility to tell the nation of the hardships, injustice, humiliations, ill-treatment, vandalism and destruction inflicted on individual men and women and on the country by the manipulators of the Cultural Revolution. Of course, they also gave vent unreservedly to what they themselves had felt, thought and witnessed during the dark, barbaric, absurd days. With a sense of relief and mental liberation they wrote with a kind of spontaneous freedom they had not experienced in the past.

The promotion of the open policy to the West and the acknowledgement of the importance of knowledge on the part of the party and government certainly had much to do with this outburst of energy and enthusiasm. But the strong aversion to all literary dogmas and doctrinaire restriction on freedom of expression also played a vital part. In their efforts to shake off the old shackles, however, writers and poets, particularly those of the younger generation, could not help going a little too far. Several of them even rejected and refuted the traditional practice and conviction that literature should reflect the life and thought of the people, and the reality of the times. They withdrew into their personal inner world or the tiny world of the instinctive activities of the individual human animal. Writings in the vein of Freudian psycho-analysis or stream-of-consciousness began to appear, as often as not, rather superficial, and even developed into a vogue attracting attention among the youngish new writers. In the field of poetry, some new poets produced a kind of verse incoherent in logic, ungrammatical in syntax, uncouth in style, and as a result totally unintelligible to the common reader, who dubbed it 'obscure' or 'muddled' poetry. Some Western sinologists, probably also out of their aversion to the dogmatic literary practices of the immediate past, regarded this type of poetry (including similar experiments in playwriting and fiction) as the mainstream in contemporary Chinese literature, translating it into Western languages under the more elegant label of 'misty poetry'.

This new development represented, for the most part, a psychological and

emotional reaction to past dogmatism not only in writing, but also in life and human relationships. This reaction was also quite widespread among other sections of the intelligentsia, including university students. They were looking for a quick change and some of them turned to the West for inspiration, going so far as to advocate the 'wholesale Westernisation' of the country. A number of students left their classrooms to demonstrate in the streets, demanding 'democracy' and 'freedom' in Western terms, as in December 1987. This unexpected turn of events shocked the party and the government. But the measures taken this time were much more prudent than before. Only three intellectuals were expelled from the party: the well-known scientist, Fang Lizhi, and two writers, Wang Ruowang and Liu Binyan, who were regarded as the proponents of the various alien ideas. The ensuing action was the initiation of a campaign against 'bourgeois liberalisation'. It aroused for a time widespread misgivings about a return of the Cultural Revolution. These misgivings were contagious, with the result that the popular reaction to the campaign was no more than lukewarm. Before long, it evaporated with little trace. The subsequent march of events has testified that China will not become bourgeois by any means, but will stick to the orientation of socialism. The country will continue, with still greater determination and effort, to carry out its programme of modernisation, opening up to the outside world, reforming its political structure, and promoting democracy and freedom—the kind of 'democracy' and 'freedom' that are socialist, to be enjoyed by all the people, and in which Chinese intellectuals can give full play to their initiative, talents and capabilities.

In the course of the drive for modernisation, more and more intellectuals will be needed as a very important section of the people, and of the national productive force as well. Increasing numbers of them are being trained each year, and knowledge and intellect have already started exerting a notable influence on the modernisation of the land. China, with its size, population and natural resources, with the ingenuity of its people and an intelligentsia always prepared to serve the nation, will very likely display in the not too distant future a new physiognomy, different from 'the world' as understood in the Confucian context.

LITERARY PROFILE

Depth of vision: the fiction of Naguib Mahfouz

Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud

I

In an address to the Swedish Academy, delivered on his behalf on 10 December 1988, Mahfouz, who is personally a very modest man, proudly asserted his position as a writer of the Third World, an Egyptian Arab and heir to a seven thousand year-old civilisation and an enlightened religion whose first victorious soldiers would occasionally exchange prisoners for books. He acknowledged his debt to Western culture and literature and ended with a plea for even-handed justice for the nations of the Third World. His speech in acceptance of the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature summarises Mahfouz's character; his compassion and his preoccupation with the plight of Man.

Mahfouz was born in December 1911 in Gamalia, in the heart of Islamic Cairo, 'the city of a thousand minarets'. His father was a minor government official, but Egyptians who held government posts under British rule had a high social status. They were well-educated, and had stable salaries. Like most Egyptians of the time, Mahfouz's father was a great enthusiast for the campaigns for independence, and the uprisings against British occupation. The Egyptian National Revolution of 1919 is described in many of Mahfouz's novels as 'the glorious revolution', the real expression of a whole people's will to rise and overcome an oppressive foreign rule. Its leader, Saad Zaghlul, is portrayed as *the* national hero, ready to suffer hardship and punishment for his people. Zaghlul's short career after his triumphant return from exile is neither tarnished by compromise nor by the faintest shadow of the opportunism which subsequently tainted the reputations of many of his colleagues. Zaghlul's death in 1927 is depicted in Mahfouz's fiction as a personal blow to many of his characters. Mahfouz was only a boy of seven when the National Revolution broke out in March 1919, but he lived close to the area of the Azhar Mosque-University, the boiling centre of demonstrations against, and counter-attacks by, the British 'police constables' on horseback, who shot live ammunition into the crowds and pursued fleeing demonstrators into the mosque itself. He often told interviewers of how as a child he had watched the events from the roof top of his home; of how he had listened to the crack of the bullets from behind the closed windows and how he had later watched the funerals of the 'martyrs' from Gamalia and from the other quarters of the city as the mourners filed from the Mosque of Al-Hussein, the martyred grandson

of the Prophet, to the burial grounds on the edge of the desert, as the funeral prayers were read on the way.

Mahfouz seems to have been particularly fortunate in having a mother who apparently enjoyed more freedom than was common among women of her generation. As the last of her children, with a gap of almost ten years between him and the youngest of his siblings, he was her constant and close companion. She often took him to the Egyptian Museum where she was fascinated by the 'Mummy Rooms'. She took him to the Pyramids and the Sphinx, and in the company of his father, they often made excursions to the gardens surrounding Quba Palace. He accompanied her when she visited the ladies of the neighbourhood, hence his familiarity with the life of the secluded females of his generation, into whose company no adult male (outside their immediate family) could normally be admitted. He was also there when these ladies returned his mother's visits and when his mother received one of 'a curious class of women who sold amulets and charms professed to chase away demons', and who doubled as matchmakers and small peddlers but were probably most interesting to him as repositories of folklore and superstition as well as local gossip.

He was twelve when his family moved to a house in the new leafy suburb of Abbassia (now a crowded central area in the heart of greater Cairo). It was there that he formed the most important relationships in his life: five boys from the neighbourhood whose close friendship with him lasted to the end of their lives. His latest novel, published in weekly instalments in the Friday edition of *Al-Ahram* in autumn 1988, starts with the boyhood scenes of Abbassia and introduces the close-knit group of friends whose lives—complete with wives, children and grandchildren—provide a means of capturing the flux of Egypt's history in the twentieth century.

Mahfouz joined the Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University, even though his family was pressing him to study medicine or engineering on account of his good grades in science and mathematics. He later said that he was bent on studying philosophy, thinking in his youthful innocence that it would help him 'solve the mystery of existence'. He graduated in 1934 the second in his class and thought to continue with his academic studies. He worked on an MA thesis on aesthetics for two years, but gave it up decisively to devote himself to literature. It is a measure of his self-discipline and his devotion to his art that all aspects of his life were subordinated to the service of his craft. He earned his living by working in the civil service, first in a small administrative post in Cairo University (Fouad University at the time) and later in the Ministry of Waqf (Mortmain Endowments).

After the July Revolution of 1952, Mahfouz was transferred to the newly founded Ministry of Culture, in the arts administration. With his growing literary fame he was promoted from small government posts to higher ranks of the civil service. His last post before retiring from service at the age of sixty, was as adviser to the Minister of Culture. He was then appointed resident

writer at *Al-Ahram*, an honorary post he keeps to this day. The ant-like existence of thousands of 'little men' in dusty, decaying corridors, not of power but of servitude, at the foot of a hierarchical pyramid of bureaucracy has provided Mahfouz with subject matter as well as imaginative vision in many of his works. Mahfouz is married, with two daughters, but his private life is kept separate from his public career. Fans of long standing and critics who have interviewed him were never invited to his home. On 13 October 1988 the news of his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature burst upon him, disrupting the routine of his well-ordered life. The media penetrated to the modest two-bedroom flat in Aguza where he has been living for the last twenty years. Only then did the photographs of his jubilant wife and shy daughters appear in the glossy pages of a score of Arabic magazines. Fatma and Um-Kulthum were persuaded to fly to Stockholm in December 1988 to collect the Nobel Prize on their father's behalf, but neither they nor the author's wife attended the earlier ceremony held in the Presidential Palace in Cairo on 7 November 1988, when President Hosni Mubarak awarded him the Order of the Nile.

II

Mahfouz had the standard school education of his time, learned whole sections of the Koran by heart as a little boy, studied the classics of Arabic literature and fell under the spell of the sentimental writings of Al-Manfaluty in his adolescent years. He was also interested in science and read Charles Darwin in translation. Like Kamal in the *Trilogy*, he wrote articles on evolution and new scientific findings for periodicals of the late 1920s and early 1930s. His association with Salama Moussa's *Al-Majalla Al-Jadida* (The New Review) led to the publication of his first novel, *Play of Fate*, published in 1939 as a special number of that monthly. Mahfouz has often admitted his debt to Salama Moussa who regularly published his articles, but was the first to show preference for his fiction (Mahfouz's first short story published in *Al-Majalla Al-Jadida* in August 1934, has a strange affinity with his last novel published in *Al-Ahram*, September–November 1988).

As a boy Mahfouz had discovered the exciting romances and detective stories of Charles Jarvis and Edgar Wallace, and many such translations sold in cheap editions outside one or two cinemas in Cairo. He copied out a few which he liked most, affixing *his* name in place of the author's. When in 1936 he made his choice in favour of fiction, he set out to read the classics of the novel in the West. He depended on John Drinkwater's *Outline of Literature* as a guide to what he *should* read, covering William Shakespeare, Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Leo Tolstoy, Sir Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas. He read Herman Melville's *Billy Bud*, but could not bear the lengthy *Moby Dick*. He found Charles Dickens unreadable, but not John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*. He read in English, but welcomed Arabic translations as being

quicker to read. He later turned to Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. He diligently read books on the art of fiction and planned the novels of his 'middle' period accordingly.

Writing of Mahfouz twenty years ago, it was easy to describe the development of his work from historical romance, to the social novel of contemporary life, and finally to the experimental novel of more artistic interest to the sophisticated reader. Most of the novels available in translation belong to those thirty years of ordered development. Yet, his writings after 1967 defy the old classification. There has been a breakdown of form in his work since the shock of the Arab defeat of June 1967, and some of his books of the last twenty years have puzzled his critics and put off translators. It is not surprising that June 1967 should have shaken his work to its foundations, for his interests have always been humanist and nationalistic.

His first novel, *Play of Fate* (1939), was a historical romance set in ancient Egypt, and displayed the influence of Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *Awdat Al-Ruh* (1934). Al-Hakim's maxim of 'all for one' summarised Mahfouz's vision of a people whose aspirations were centred around the character of Pharaoh, the God-King for whom they built the Great Pyramid. In 1943 and 1944 he published two more novels, also supposedly set in ancient Egypt, *Radopese* and *Theban Struggle*. The ancient setting did not disguise the modern theme, inspired as it was by the national cause. In *Radopese*, a youthful Pharaoh is alienated from his people by a woman (comparable to Emile Zola's Nana) with whom he falls in love. His people rebel against him and finally kill him, an apparent anachronism. Mahfouz was, in fact, portraying the sentiments of the Egyptian people in the early 1940s in their disillusionment with their youthful king. Despite the efforts of King Farouq's supporters to construct an image of him as a young Pharaoh who would deliver his people from foreign oppression, the king proved only to be interested in his own pleasure, and increasingly disappointed the people. The third novel, *Theban Struggle*, represents the conflict between ancient Egyptian kings and the invading Hyksos of the north. The analogy with the modern British forces of occupation was obvious; the Hyksos were represented as 'fair and blue-eyed'.

Mahfouz later confessed that he had modelled these first three novels on the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas. The example of Sir Walter Scott is obvious in the attempt to portray ancient Egyptians in their daily life and customs. The novels were a direct product of the growing interest in the glorious past of Egypt and the Pharaohs; an increasingly important element in nationalist propaganda of the time. In this respect, the influence of Salama Moussa is clear, since she was one of the most active propagandists for Pharaonic Egypt. Mahfouz's next step was a logical one. He turned his eyes from the glories of the past to the miseries of the present. From historical romance he proceeded to the realistic novel of contemporary life, firmly establishing the realist tradition started by Tawfiq Al-Hakim, and perfecting his

narrative technique to a degree beyond the achievement of any of his contemporaries.

Between 1945 and 1949, Mahfouz published five of his best-known works: *Modern Cairo*, *Khan al-Khalili*, *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, *The Mirage*, and *Bedaya wa Nehaya* (The Beginning and the End). The five novels paint a ruthless picture of the life of the lower middle class in Cairo in the late 1930s and the years of the Second World War. The poverty, the frustrations and confined lives of petty government officials and small tradesmen are laid bare. Mahfouz sees their lives as being in a constant state of flux, represented in the first two novels of that period by reversals of fortune within a strictly limited span of time. It finds its best expression, however, in the novel that made Mahfouz's name in 1947 and remains one of the most popular of his works, *Zuqaq al-Midaq*.

A *zuqaq* in Arabic is a blind alley, and the place name of the title of this novel (a feature of many of Mahfouz's novels) is a little blind alley near the Azhar, the Islamic theological school in Cairo. It provides the setting for much of the action of the novel, investing it with a rigorous unity of place. The characters are the tenants of the two houses and the few shops in the place. The subject is the impact of the Second World War, an event that might seem to have nothing to do with the inhabitants of the little *zuqaq*, tucked away in the protecting shadow of the Azhar and the minarets of a hundred mosques. The *zuqaq* is a microcosm, a small world of both rich and poor, governed by the same forces as those operating in the larger one.

The action of the novel starts with an incident of obvious significance: an electrician is installing a second-hand radio in a coffee-house, where the male inhabitants of the alley spend their evenings. When the blind old *sha'ir* or bard arrives with his *rababa* (a primitive musical instrument like the ancient Greek lyre), the proprietor rudely sends him away. The old man laments his misfortune. The radio has systematically been putting him out of business; clients are no longer interested in the traditional *siras* of time-honoured heroes such as Abu Zeid or Antar, or stories from the *Arabian Nights*. The radio with its modern music and fashionable songs, a contrivance of modern technology, is now taking over. The theme of change emphasised in the very first scene is underlined by the proprietor of the coffee-house, who angrily remarks that 'everything is changing'. Apart from the natural course of change wrought by time, there is a different, more violent transformation being caused by the war. The inhabitants of the *zuqaq* are non-combatants, yet the war invades their lives in the form of rising prices, a partial blackout and—above all—in new, well-paid jobs. Men work in the ordnance in Cairo and in the extensive allied base along the banks of the Suez Canal. They are well-paid and have plenty of opportunities for making extra money in collaboration with the soldiers responsible for catering.

Abbas, a mild, contented young man, is forced to seek work in the British camps. He is a barber, who even owns a little shop, but his business is modest,

for his clients are poor. He is in love with Hamida, the beauty of the *zuqaq*, but when he returns a few months later with the necessary *shahka* or wedding present, he finds that the girl has disappeared. She too has been attracted by the money flowing in the allied camps, and elopes with Faraj, who runs a chain of brothels and night clubs for the entertainment of the forces, recruiting handsome, needy girls to cater for the lonely soldiers. Hamida seems to find her true element in the business, since it provides her with all the money and fine clothes she covets. The action ends in tragedy for the young barber who sees his betrothed in a tavern, in the middle of a group of red-faced British soldiers, assaults her and is beaten to death by the drunken soldiers.

Zuqaq al-Midaq was an immediate success, drawing readers' attention to Naguib Mahfouz who had been patiently and diligently publishing his work for more than ten years. His keen, penetrating vision did much to endear the novel to Arabic readers, but it was mainly his capacity for creating living, recognisable, yet singular characters that struck his readers with a sense of revelation. The characters of *Zuqaq al-Midaq* assumed a life of their own very much like the characters of Charles Dickens, though Mahfouz depicted them in a more realist tradition; they have caught the imagination of a whole nation and become part of Egypt's consciousness.

Mahfouz's major contributions to the social novel were the three novels of the *Trilogy*, published in 1956-57. It is a most ambitious work, and an audacious one in the light of the circumstances under which it was written. The scene remains the old Islamic part of Cairo, while the action involves three generations of one family from 1917 to 1944. It is not exactly a chronicle of political events and social upheavals, but the lives of individual characters are closely tied up with the historical events of a period pregnant with significant changes.

The first part of the *Trilogy*, *Bein el-Qasrein* (The Castle of Desire), introduces the reader to the family of Sayyed Ahmed Abd-el-Jawad, a merchant of ample means and sound reputation, a typical father and absolute tyrant in his household. His wife and children obey him blindly, never questioning his authority or enquiring into his affairs, but treating him with a god-like reverence. He, however, has another side to his character which his wife and children do not suspect, spending his evenings with a group of friends either in the house of an *'alma*—a professional dancer-singer—who is also his mistress, or in the boat-house of one of his friends. During these bouts of revelry, he is a different man altogether, witty and gentle. This duality of character was apparently commonly accepted in the Egypt of 1917.

The first upheaval that shakes the well-organised and firmly controlled household is the revolution of 1919. Sayyed Ahmed Abd-el-Jawad is a patriot who signs petitions and declarations in support of the national leaders, subscribing generously to the funds of the revolutionary parties. Yet, when he realises that his son Fahmy, a law student, has been an active member in the student

leadership of the revolution, he is concerned about the safety of his son, and angrily orders him to cease these dangerous activities. The young man suffers a terrible conflict. Though he loves his father and cannot dream of disobeying him, his devotion to the cause of the revolution is equally strong. Fahmy is killed, not in revolutionary action, but in a peaceful demonstration, licensed by the command of the British forces and arranged by the Egyptians to celebrate the recall of Saad Zaghlul and his companions from their place of exile. Fahmy's death has more than one significance in the novel. It is the outcome of a treacherous act on the part of the British authorities, a premonition of almost another forty years of delays and double dealing. On a personal level, the father's affliction shakes the routine of his life almost completely. For five years he abjures drink and women, as do some of his old friends, in sympathy with his grief. He pities his wife in her bereavement and relaxes his old, now meaningless, restrictions on her personal freedom. She can go out as often as she likes to visit the grave of her son, and seek comfort in visits to the shrines of Muslim saints, or call on her married daughters. *Bein el-Qasrein* depicts with historical accuracy the incidents of the revolution in Cairo, as they form the background to the day-to-day world of the Abd-el-Jawad family and others with whom they come into contact.

The second part of the trilogy, *Qasr al-Shoaq* (Between the Two Castles), continues the story with the second generation of the family. The father and mother are alive but the major character is Kamal, the youngest son of Sayyed Ahmed Abd-el-Jawad. Kamal is only a boy of ten in 1919, and is typical of his generation, which has become deeply disillusioned in the aftermath of the revolution. Romantic and reflective, Kamal is definitely not a man of action. He reads Darwin, writes on philosophy and chooses teaching as a noble career. He is introduced to new socialist ideas, but is paralysed in politics by disillusionment and contemplation, in love by an adolescent romantic infatuation of which he has never been fully cured.

In *Al-Sukkariya* (The Sugar Bowl), the third part of the *Trilogy*, Kamal is an adult, a teacher and a bachelor who leads the dual life of the Abd-el-Jawad males. In politics, he remains a Wafdist, though the setbacks and compromises of the Nationalist Party, the Wafd, after the death of Zaghlul turn him into an 'onlooker', whose political involvement does not exceed occasional, unenthusiastic attendance at mass Wafdist meetings. Where Kamal's brother, Fahmy, had represented the fervour and purity of the revolution, his colleagues are now ministers or well-known politicians, who have lost the purity of Fahmy and the other martyrs. Their hands are soiled with the real business of negotiating with the British, governing intermittently and constantly fencing with the king and with other political parties. It is Kamal's two young nephews who take action: they join the two movements historically evolving from the pre-war revolutionary activity of the country; one becomes a Muslim Brother, the other a Marxist revolutionary. Both are arrested and interned.

Kamal's incapacity for action is demonstrated by his failure to marry. The split in his character and the duality of his life paralyse the respectable teacher whose image is undermined by his drinking and secret visits to Jalila's brothel. Permanently scarred by his adolescent love for the dark, slim A'ida, he continues to seek ideals of female beauty that are the reverse: 'He would not buy a dark slim beauty for a dollar!' All he needs from women, he convinces himself, is sex, which he gets anyway: 'Marriage is a kind of faith to which you have to surrender yourself. A thinker does not and should not marry.' He considers his liberty too precious to lose, though it is the liberty to remain an outsider, a contemplative onlooker at the 'machinery of life'. Even when he falls in love for the second time, with A'ida's younger sister, he wilfully ignores the girl's open invitation, losing the chance of surrendering his alienated ego to the new relationship and achieving salvation for his lonely soul. The cowardly turning away from the opportunity offered by a loving, understanding woman is used again by Mahfouz in later novels to indicate a character's failure to deal with reality and take the necessary steps to become one with the community.

III

Mahfouz seems to have exhausted his 'phase' of social realism with the *Trilogy*. After this recognised 'peak', his work shows evidence of a turning-point in both vision and technique. His next novel was the controversial *Awlad Haretna*, published serially in *Al-Ahram* (1959). The title, translated by Philip Stewart as *Children of Gebelawi*, literally means 'Children of Our Alley'. Mahfouz's novel uses as the scene of the action the *hara*, a small unit in civic divisions of medieval Cairo. The *hara* system, whereby the cleanliness, lighting and orderliness of the *hara* were the responsibility of the inhabitants, supervised by a *Sheikh* accountable to the authorities, survived to the first decades of this century. Today only the office of *Sheikh al-hara* survives, in the shopkeeper or householder who serves as guarantor of his neighbours in the police station or *qism*.

The novel gives us a vision of humanity in its repeated attempts to regain the Earthly Paradise. It caused an uproar in some religious circles, because the powerful Gebelawi, great grandfather of the 'Children of Our Alley', now mysteriously secluded in his old age, apart from his children, was understood to be God. The novel's form also elicited criticism, since it has exactly as many chapters as there are Suras in the Koran.

Three characters—the leaders of poor people in their rise against the Steward of the Waqf, the *Sheikh al-hara*, and the rich 'money changers'—were understood to represent Moses, Jesus and Mohammad. The Azhar does not license the presentation of the Prophets or their associates in works of fiction, drama or cinema, and the novel was not therefore published in book form in Cairo. It was, however, published in Beirut in the 1960s and has been con-

stantly available in Egypt and other Arab countries in the more expensive Beirut edition. Technically, the novel has little interest for the student of Mahfouz's art. The narrative technique is that of the *Trilogy*: it combines panoramic, almost photographic, descriptions with a wealth of realistic detail. It is rather the new vision of the *hara*, and of the universal elements within the particular situation, that mark an important breakthrough in his work.

When Mahfouz's next novel was serialised in *Al-Ahram* in 1960, his admirers followed the instalments with great interest. He was obviously embarking on something new. *Al-Liss wal-Kilah* (The Thief and the Dogs) was the first of a series of six short novels that followed in the course of seven years. In my opinion they are, taken together as a group, the best of his work. He discarded the narrative techniques of the naturalistic novel of the nineteenth century and attempted something more complex, more modern, and moreover, highly artistic.

Asked to explain the obvious change in his technique, he wrote in 1964,

When I was preoccupied with life and its significance, the most suitable method for me was the realistic one. That was the tradition I followed for many years. Details of background, character and plot are important in a technique that sets out to mirror or reflect life as a whole; ideas may proceed as an indirect result. When I was interested in thought and ideas, neither characters, incidents nor background seemed important in themselves. Character became more or less a symbol or a type. Details of background were discarded and incidents were plotted to contribute to the main idea.

If we read 'vision' for 'idea', which is the word he used in later interviews, we have the key to the apparently abrupt change from the lengthy trilogy of over a thousand pages to the concise short novels he produced in the 1960s. His vision is more concentrated, transcending particular details. Background is evoked by suggestive hints in place of detailed description. He explores new methods of narration; the stream of consciousness, the side comment or chorus-like effect of accidental talk, the hallucinations of a hashish-smoker and the quartet of internal monologues, are all utilised in these novels. The language is rich with imagery and associations, and human destiny assumes significance beyond the proportions of the particular in character.

The same period has been marked by the author's return to the short story. Mahfouz had, like many others, started as a short story writer. His early short stories were obviously modelled on those of Guy de Maupassant, and are interesting only to students of his work, as they contain the germs of many incidents and ideas later developed in his novels. His new short stories discard the shock tactics of the 'short story proper' of the nineteenth century and reveal the same imaginative complexity and depth of vision as the later novels.

The novels themselves could easily be classified as long short stories but they are in fact full-blown novels, showing more affinity with the novel of the twentieth century than the narratives of the 1950s. Even the scene of the novels

changed, together with the technique and the method of narration. Part of the action is moved to Alexandria; the sea, the corniche and the old history of the city all play a part in evoking a special atmosphere more suitable to the new subject matter. Mahfouz first introduced the Alexandria setting in his novel, *Autumn Quail* (1961). Alexandria is famous for the flocks of quail that cross the Mediterranean in the autumn in their flight to warmer climates. The birds, tired and bruised after their long flight, drop to the ground and are immediately entrapped in the meshes of the nets set by the men lying in wait. Eissa, the hero—or rather anti-hero—of the novel, seeks refuge in Alexandria in the autumn, a time when the city is comparatively deserted after the full summer season. He arrives with broken wings and blighted hopes after a short and spectacular career in party politics in pre-revolutionary Egypt. As a member of the Wafd, he had, like many others, been corrupted by authority when the party came into office. The July Revolution of 1952 sweeps away the old regime and all its trappings.

The image of Alexandria in autumn as a refuge and a final resting-place, is further developed in the last novel of that group. *The Pension Miramar* or the 'Egyptian Alexandria Quartet' as one might call it, was first published serially in 1966. The action is confined to Alexandria and narration is discarded completely as the story is told by means of the four monologues of four different characters. It is a modern quartet in the old tradition of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), a tradition still very much alive in Arabic literature. The subject of a young attractive country-girl jealously defending her 'honour', which in Arabic usage is synonymous with virginity, still commands an intense emotional response from Arab audiences. The Pamela in this case is Zahra, a beautiful peasant girl from the neighbouring province of Beheira. Zahra is among the 'new' *fallaha*, or Egyptian peasantry, who has deliberately left her home after her father's death, because her people wish to marry her to an old man. She seeks work in Pension Miramar where the old landlady is glad to employ the strong, youthful Fallaha, her beautiful face being another asset which the landlady can turn to many useful ends of her own. But the girl disappoints the male residents who take her for easy prey. Mariana, the old Greek landlady, is a relic of the Alexandria of the past. This past dominates her thoughts and her conversation; it is constantly present in the form of a number of portraits hanging on the walls of the lounge and to which she often leads the conversation.

It is not only Zahra who takes refuge at Mariana's pension, but a number of guests do the same. Amer Wagdi, an aged journalist, is an old Wafdist and a relic of the revolution of 1919. Tolba Marzuq, his political enemy, is a former minister, a palace conspirator and a very rich landowner. Both are lonely old men who try to find a home in Pension Miramar. There are also some young men. Hosni Allam is the son of a rich, landed family in Tanta, with an estate of a hundred acres of good land, the maximum allowed by

agrarian reform, and nothing but his own pleasure to serve. Another is Mansur Bahi, a young communist who has been persuaded by his brother, an influential police officer, to abandon his comrades just before their arrest. He is placed by his brother in the protecting care of Mariana, and lives there in a private hell of his own. A third young man, Sarhan al-Beheiri, seeks the pension in pursuit of Zahra, whom he loves and wishes to seduce.

The action of the novel revolves around Zahra, and the characters are differentiated according to their attitudes towards the *fallaha*. The characters are well-matched. Old Tolba Marzuq and young Hosni Allam are representatives of the old landed aristocracy. Amer Wagdi, the disappointed old revolutionary has great sympathy for Mansur, the frustrated young revolutionary. Sarhan is the new element, a false revolutionary, an opportunist who adopts socialist jargon and revolutionary slogans to achieve his own ends. He takes part in a criminal plan to make a private fortune out of the products of the plant where he works, but fails as he has failed in seducing Zahra, and finally commits suicide.

The four voices that tell the story are the voices of Amer Wagdi, Hosni Allam, Mansur Bahi and Sarhan. Each tells it from his standpoint and each monologue is coloured by the special tone and preoccupations of the speaker. The old journalist is the first speaker and also the last. His soliloquy is a link with the past, as he incorporates his recollections in speaking of the present. He sympathises with Zahra and kindly encourages her when she decides to take private lessons to learn to read. He is too old really to care deeply for anything but he looks on, Tiresius who can see through it all.

The six novels of this group do not exhibit any illusions about what has come to be called Nasser's Egypt, but the military defeat of June 1967 and the upheaval that followed—the unmasking of corruption, the persecution by the Secret Service, the self-recriminations, the breast beating and bitter disillusionment—shook Egyptians' consciousness profoundly. The verb Mahfouz uses in Arabic to describe this effect is *zalzala*, derived from the noun 'earthquake'. As mentioned above, his work shows a breakdown of form at this point. Between October and December 1967, he wrote a number of short stories and one-act plays where this dissolution is clear (collected in *Tahta al-Mizalla, The Bus Shelter*, 1969). He had never published any plays before, but he seems to have lost patience with the narrative form. The vision is nightmarish and the action absurd. Two more collections of this kind followed, all depending mostly on dialogue: *Shahr al-A'ssal* (The Honeymoon) and *Hikaya bila Bidaya wala Nihaya* (Story Without Beginning or End) both of 1971. One of the stories in the first collection is easy to interpret in spite of the nightmarish unreality of the experience. The narrator, a school teacher living in Helwan, a suburb to the south of Cairo, has problems with his landlord who has people attending psychic seances in his flat all night. One morning he falls asleep while waiting for a train at the station, having been up all night because of the

ances. He wakes up to the noise of shouting and running feet, to be told that someone has killed the pretty midwife of the suburb; she had screamed and run towards him for help but he had been fast asleep. The story is simply called 'Sleep'.

Mahfouz has continued to publish a novel or a collection of short stories every year for the last twenty years. He says that writing for him is life and that only death will put a stop to his endeavours. The most interesting of his later works are those set in the now mythical *hara*: *Hikayat Haretna* (Stories of Our Alley) 1975, and *Malhamat al-Harafish* (Epic of the Riff-Raff) 1977. The *hara* imaginatively depicted by Mahfouz is indeed a small and complete world, with the language of narrative nostalgic, almost poetic.

Mahfouz's last novel *Qushtumor* (1988) returns to the subject of the *Trilogy*, but carries the story to the present day. The *Trilogy* ends on a note of anticipation: the expected birth of Karima's new baby at the same time as the death of her grandmother, Amina. *Qushtumor*, after covering the life of Egypt from the beginning of the twentieth century, ends with the old narrator talking to his two friends, emphasising the importance of personal relations. That only faithful friendship and loyalty endure is the sole message they have for others. As Amer Wagdi, the old narrator in *The Pension Miramar*, ends his narrative with verses from the Koran which evoke mercy from the Beneficent, *Qushtumor* ends with verses from *Surat al-Dhuha* (Sura XCIII):

... Did He not find thee an orphan and give
thee shelter (and care). And he found thee
wandering and gave thee guidance. And he found
thee in need, and made thee independent.
Therefore treat not the orphan with harshness,
nor repulse the petitioner unheard. But the
bounty of thy Lord rehearse and proclaim.

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LITERARY FEATURE REVIEWS

Choosing to inhabit the real world

Anita Desai*

The Shadow Lines

Amitav Ghosh

London: Bloomsbury. 1988. 246pp. £12.95hb

Amitav Ghosh won much acclaim for his first novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1986). Although unabashedly derivative and almost plagiaristically shadowing Salman Rushdie's celebrated novels, *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983), it had about it an exuberance of fantasy, a gusto of the imagination and many memorable and vivid passages that made one feel that here was a writer who had unfortunately allowed himself to go astray. Next, there appeared in *Granta* a piece that was obviously based on his own experiences as a student of anthropology researching in Egypt; he chose to be plainly realistic but showed a wit, humour and sophistication of style that were like the flash of an original and distinctive gift emerging from the troubled ocean of internationalism, magical realism and literary borrowings.

In his second novel, *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh has abandoned that internationally popular 'magical realism' and made the more modest, less ambitious choice of old-fashioned realistic narrative, with only a touch or two, at the end, of Rushdie's method of addressing the reader directly and weaving his own experiences into the fictional ones. It is by comparison with his first book a curiously flat, muted and quiet work but it has qualities that are not imitative and are entirely his own.

The settings are Calcutta, London and Dhaka, the characters both Indian and English: much scope for international dazzle, but Ghosh eschews scene-painting and if he does mention the cotton-man of the Calcutta streets, the sweet seller of Dhaka or the coffee bars in London, it is because they belong to his story, and not for their effect. He does not have any interest in painting different worlds for us—on the contrary, he makes them so similar that one has scarcely any sense of passing from one culture over the border into another. Since the theme of his novel is that there are no borders, that lands and peoples would blend if it were not for history, the somewhat dull monochrome of his landscape has its reasons.

The narrator's grandmother, originally from Dhaka when it was the capital

* Anita Desai's novel, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 11(1) January 1989, pp 167-8.

of East Bengal, has been persuaded to revisit it now that it is the capital of East Pakistan.

... She wanted to know whether she would be able to see the borders between India from the plane. When my father laughed and said, why, did she really think the border was a long black line with green on one side and scarlet on the other, like it was in a school atlas, she was not so much offended as puzzled ... 'But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, what's the difference, then? And if there's no difference, both sides will be the same: it'll be just like it used to be before ... What was it all for then- Partition and the killing and everything—if there isn't something in between?'

Her more sophisticated granddaughter, Ila, who flies regularly from one country to another, her father being a diplomat, and goes to international schools in various glamorous capitals of the world, sees differences in the lands but hardly those that matter; what she notices is that, in Cairo, 'the ladies is way on the other side of the departure lounge'. The narrator cannot comprehend such a blasé attitude: for him the mere words 'Underground', 'Holborn', 'Brick Lane' contain a sensual delight that he rolls upon his tongue like toffees or cigarette smoke. He has been schooled in the romance of otherness by his older cousin, Tridib, a somewhat enigmatic figure who has travelled everywhere and can talk learnedly of 'Mesopotamian stelae, East European jazz, the habits of arboreal apes, the plays of Garcia Lorca ...' Unfortunately, the narrator fails to convey to the reader his compelling aura; we have simply to take his word for it since Tridib never quite comes to life. When he dies—a pointless, violent death that can be interpreted as a martyrdom or hushed up as an unfortunate mistake—he fades out of our minds rather like an old photograph in an album. The Price family in London, who hold such a fascination for the little Bengali boy in Calcutta, likewise suffer from a dampness that prevents them from catching fire in our imagination. Their fortunes are rather improbably linked to those of the Bengali family and Tridib's affair with the English girl, May, is so vaguely sketched that it hardly stands out as an event from the surrounding monochrome.

Where Ghosh excels is in detecting and conveying those unspoken, unmentioned concepts on which societies are built and in which they show their uniqueness. His account of the joint family in Dhaka that is riven in two by the petty quarrelling and jealousies of the women who 'began to suspect each other of favouring their own children above the rest, of purloining the best little tid-bits of food from the common larder, and so on ...' will be instantly recognisable to any Indian reader. One sees how accurate, how exact his understanding of Indian society is in lines such as: 'Among the women I knew, like my mother and my relatives, there were none, no matter how secluded, who were free from that peculiar, manipulative worldliness which came from dealing with large families—a trait which seemed to grow in those women in direct proportion to the degree to which they were secluded from the world.'

This extraordinary piece of 'inner knowledge' shows that it is not only to women writers one must turn for subtle insights into the family structure, the web of relationships, sticky and sweet, clinging and trapping.

His intuitive understanding of this society goes deeper than such insights, however, and touches upon the roots of its being. The narrator (who seems more canny and worldly as a child than he does when he grows into an ingenuous youth) stands staring at a stagnant pool beside which factories and shanties cluster and watches women 'squatting at the edge of the pool, splashing with both hands to drive back the layer of sludge, scooping up the clear water underneath to scrub their babies and wash their clothes and cooking utensils'. Beyond that are some hillocks of 'some black and gravelly substance' on which small figures move, picking up rubble and dropping it into their sacks. 'They are perfectly camouflaged, like chameleons, because everything on them, their clothes, their faces, their skin, was the uniform matt black of the sludge'. When discovered, the child is snatched away with the cry 'Don't look there, it's dirty!' 'I went willingly,' he says. 'I was already well-schooled in looking away, the jungle-craft of gentility,' but he knows that pool of sludge, that hill of rubble:

was palpable everywhere in our house: I had grown up with it. It was the landscape that lent a note of hysteria to my mother's voice when she drilled me for examinations; it was to these slopes she pointed when she told me that if I didn't study hard I would end up *there*, that the only weapon people like us had was our brains and if we didn't use them like claws to cling to what we'd got, that's where we'd end up, marooned in that landscape . . . it was that landscape that seethed beneath the polished floors of our house; it was that sludge that gave our genteel decorum its fine edge of frenzy.

Such insights, described in a prose that is intelligent and controlled—and embellished by many elegant accuracies like 'that comfortable lassitude which we call a sense of homecoming'—make one grateful that Ghosh has chosen to inhabit the real world rather than the artificial land of fantasy, and makes one watch his development as a novelist with high expectations.

Passive disorientation: Indo-Anglian journeys

Shahrukh Husain

Saré Maré

S K Walker

London: Pandora Press, 1987. 173pp. £3.95pb

The Tiger's Daughter

Bharati Mukherjee

London/New York: Penguin. 1987. 210pp. £3.95/\$6.95pb

Amritvela

Leena Dhingra

London: The Women's Press. 1988. 176pp. £3.95pb

That Long Silence

Shashi Deshpande

London: Virago Press. 1988. 196pp. £4.50pb

The Middleman and other stories

Bharati Mukherjee

New York: Grove Press. 1988. 197pp. \$15.95hb

Yatra (The Journey)

Nina Sibal

London: The Women's Press. 1987. 324pp. £10.95hb/£5.95pb

The authors of these six works of fiction are women of Indian origin: Leena Dhingra and S K Walker are resident in Britain, Bharati Mukherjee lives in North America, while Shashi Deshpande and Nina Sibal currently live and work in India. Reviewed together, their experiences of life within and outside the subcontinent highlight the cultural hegemony of India, within which may be found characters both familiar and bizarre to the uninitiated reader. Yet, they converge and interact with an ease and tolerance which defies Western conceptions of reality, while creating a montage of contrasts and similarities which is wholly true to Indian life.

Interestingly, each of the five novels under review focuses on a journey of sorts and it is in India itself that each narrative unfolds. Accordingly, the concluding line of S K Walker's novel *Saré Maré* encapsulates something of the impetus of the woman at the centre of each novel:

'She was a Traveller looking for Freedom and Love.'

Cliché though it is, the line expresses the sense of 'otherness' which alienates each woman from her environment, whether this is an international metropolis or the obscure Panjabi village of *Saré Maré*, the locale of Walker's first novel.

This novel is reminiscent of those English novels that centre, in the manner of Elizabeth Gaskell, on the goings-on of a small village and its obsession with conformity, or of a black American settlement in the style of Zora Neale Hurston *et al*, with its quirky population of itinerants and marginals spicing up the lives of the *bona fide* residents. It is also genuinely picaresque, consisting as it does of a series of incidents strung together loosely from the viewpoint of the picaroon, Asha. As she grows from child to adolescent, Asha romps through the village and out of it—sometimes alone, at other times with her headmaster father—enjoying forbidden company, lying her way out of awkward situations, tolerating, then finally repelling the bewildering advances of 'kissing Grandfathers in the western tradition' (p 128). At seventeen, having spent the night with a clownish Sikh boy newly arrived from Pakistan following Partition, Asha is banished by her family to a nearby town while they decide her fate. Living with her preoccupied father, Asha at last finds a way of asserting complete power over her own body. She denies it food and turns anorexic, revelling victorious in its consequent physical malfunction: phenomenal weight-loss, amenorrhoea, boils and sores. 'But this ravaged condition masked many things—a feeling of rage, rejection, hatred and betrayal' (p 166), until Asha eventually discovers that 'She had lost the way of coming back to her people' (p 172). Asha's departure to England for further studies is therefore her last hope of personal survival.

In contrast, Tara Banerjee, the title character of Bharati Mukherjee's second novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, laments her exile to school and university in New York: 'On days she had thought she could not possibly survive, she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make the apartment more "Indian". She had curried hamburger desperately till David's stomach had protested' (p 34). Returning home after seven years as Tara Cartwright, married to writer, David, she becomes uncomfortably aware of the enormous differences of attitude that have grown between her and the Calcutta group she has regarded through the years as her kindred spirits: 'She was home in a class that lived by Victorian rules, changed decisively by the exuberance of the Hindu imagination.' But '... a vision, not necessarily benevolent, hidden by flowers and lizards, smiled at her audacity, then quickly retired' (p 34). This feeling of passive disorientation, brilliantly conveyed by Mukherjee, is a marked feature of all the novels under review although it may derive from different sources.

Mukherjee incorporates letters into the novel in order to communicate Tara's sense of 'otherness', a device shared by Leena Dhingra in *Amritvela*. Tara writes to her husband, reporting the trivia of the mundane, striving to conceal her sense of alienation from both of her bases, for to articulate it is to acknowledge that she is dispossessed. Tara's husband, like so many strangers to India, wants her 'to take a stand against injustice, against unemployment, hunger and bribery'. Yet, 'Tara knew she could never tell David that the

misery of her city was too immense and blurred to be listed and assailed one by one. That it was fatal to fight for justice; that it was better to remain passive and absorb all shocks as they came' (p 31). Mukherjee's novel is tightly structured and skilfully crafted. She summons vivid, rounded characters, then quickly, ruthlessly, discards them when they have furthered her narrative. But each character is crucial to the whole structure of her novel, anchored firmly in the real world around her: rioting workers, affluent industrialists, craven journalists and powerful politicians. Through this world moves Tara in a near catatonic state, reacting in prescribed fashion to events around her. As Tara's personal pace quickens in anticipation of a mysterious calamity that will hurl her out of her apathy, Mukherjee brings the curtain down on a powerful and disturbing finale.

Leena Dhingra's first novel, *Amritvela* (startlingly close in content to *The Tiger's Daughter*), tells of Meera's journey back to Delhi – a journey she hopes will clear away some of the bewilderment of alienation experienced during her years in Europe and her marriage to Martin. Excerpts of Meera's letters to an unknown friend punctuate Dhingra's novel. 'I am getting increasingly confused,' one begins, ending thus: 'The India I am encountering is switched off from the India I want to meet and to which I can't find the way, and I feel both that I have betrayed and . . . been betrayed' (p 118). Meera's need is for the space and isolation in which to decide her future. Yet, she resists making her choices under pressure, preferring to search indirectly for her answers, through re-living memories and rekindling old friendships in order to resurrect experiences with her long-deceased parents, with whom she believes lies the vital clue to her present identity. *Amritvela* is an elegant novel, diary-like in the arrangement of its content and emulating in its tempo the unhurried, fatalistic rhythms of India. And it is through achieving pace with Mother India's primordial rhythms that Meera's quest reaches its optimistic conclusion. *Amritvela* is enjoyable for its style and observations, its wit, its humour and its extraordinary pathos. Meera, with her mind flung open to direct discourse with her environment, listens to India telling her about its poverty, its matriarchal mythology and its diverse societies – three themes which appear, *vis-à-vis* their female protagonists, to form the leitmotif of all the novels reviewed here.

The contrast between the rich and the poor, the claustrophobic intimacy of relations – some practically unknown – and the onus upon women to preserve a loathed status quo detrimental to their own well-being, are emphasised in most of these books. The overwhelming sense of personal displacement is invariably the most powerful theme in the novels. It is therefore with profound validity that Mukherjee frames the question, 'How does foreignness begin? Does it begin right in the centre of Calcutta . . .' or indeed wherever else home may be? Certainly, the feelings of disorientation and obsessive self-denial expressed by Deshpande's central character, Jaya, in *That Long Silence*, would point to the 'foreignness' of home.

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande looks uncompromisingly from the inside at the problems confronted daily by the working-class women of Bombay and the penury-stricken high-caste women of rural India. Jaya, well-educated and intelligent, is married to Mohan, a successful executive from a lesser background, who has availed himself through fair means and foul, of the vast potential for vertical mobility in India. He makes it to a prestigious residential area of Bombay, while Jaya, ostrich-like, evades knowledge about the secret of his success. An incipient writer, Jaya seizes upon motherhood and wifehood to justify her lack of success in writing—a move ratified, even sanctified by her society. Jaya's bleak view of life is reflected in the other novels under review, where women move in a welter of inhibition, bewilderment and aimlessness as if all sense of identification with a goal has been wrested from them. Each combats in her own silent war this very sense of displacement which is somewhat easier to comprehend when it is induced by contact with ignorant foreigners.

In *The Middleman and other stories*, her compelling second anthology of short fiction about the US immigrant experience, Bharati Mukherjee speaks succinctly through the mouth of a PhD student, Panna Bhatt, watching a comedian joke about Indian women: 'It's the tyranny of the American dream that scares me. First you don't exist. Then you're invisible. Then you're funny. Then you're disgusting. Insults, my American friends will tell me, is a kind of acceptance. No instant dignity here.' ('The Wife's Story', p 26). But the severe narcissistic disturbance that comes from being downgraded in one's own milieu is infinitely more difficult to bear, substantiated as it is by the male-disseminated holy scriptures of a once matriarchal religious philosophy.

You women . . . must remember that you are the symbol of original sin and weakness. It is because of you that the Gods and Saints were misled from their righteous path and began to serve Mammon and you. The Vedas in their wisdom have given you twenty-five years in a man's life, to serve him, to bear children to him and to obey him so that his name perpetuates, but then men must also abandon you to follow the path of God. Although you are weak and sinful and lead man astray from God, today, in his name, I am ready to bless you so that you can partake of his bounty.

While the injunction upon men to don the garb of celibacy after twenty-five years of marriage is easily disregarded by the majority of Hindu men, the enslaving cult of wifehood is so deeply ingrained as to have infiltrated even a liberal, Westernised mode of behaviour.

This cross-cultural life-style is most clearly depicted in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Nina Sibal, both residents of India and both writing of heroines who live mainly in India. Deshpande talks of Jaya's early marriage, describing with amusement the young woman's failure to take seriously her sister-in-law's criticisms, simply because, never having seen her mother tend to her father's clothes, she does not regard the ordering of her husband's clothes as any part of her own wifely duties. But this neglect of such duties changes as

she quickly recognises the security of cloaking her own needs and potential failures with her husband's more important ones. Similarly, Krishna of Sibal's ambitious novel, *Yatra*, an independent law lecturer, married to a like-minded barrister, finds herself constantly humiliated by a close politician friend of her husband's family. On one occasion, she finds herself at the centre of a family crisis for asking him to return the keys to the wardrobe of her guest room. Forced by her husband to apologise, Krishna is subjected to further vituperation from the politician:

'I know lots of women like you. Don't think you're unique. There's hundreds like you who don't recognise their long-term interests, who don't know how to look after their husbands or their husband's families, which is the duty of a woman. It is the only thing which makes a woman's life worthwhile. But you don't know anything about that. You're selfish, pushing your own self forward. "See me! See me!" you cry out.'

She felt like a common street-walker. (p 89)

This gender-based condemnation of women, as fallen beings, sits uncomfortably with a desire for self-realisation, resulting in a profound guilt whose defensive outlet lies in confronting wider issues such as national poverty—a confrontation which in turn compounds the individual's feeling of powerlessness. It is possibly this guilt that leads the women of at least three of these novels to expect retribution in the form of 'tragedy', a 'calamity' or a 'crisis'—a catalyst which will punish and absolve in one violent blow, leaving the woman free to seek out her true self. For this reason, these novels can perhaps be most aptly described as 'working-through' novels, disgorging as they do memories of pain and trauma lodged so long in the psyches of many women.

This psycho-analytic trend is particularly emphasised in the structure of Deshpande's novel, where critical past experiences are sometimes recounted in *italics* and in the original words of the analysand to recreate the atmosphere of a therapy session. A novelist of some experience, although previously unpublished in the West, Shashi Deshpande succeeds in creating a central character wholly convincing and true-to-life. Unsparingly, she exposes her foibles, weaknesses and strengths—all qualities demanded of a woman living in a shame-oriented society, full of contradictions, which nevertheless dictates the shaping of her personality. In Jaya's case, her explosive temper so terrifies her husband that she succeeds in turning it inward on herself to achieve a numbness of the soul.

Written about forty years after independence, each novel mentions the upheaval of Partition. Success and class are heavily underscored by colonial yardsticks. Fluency in English, a good education after the Western tradition and a light skin are all important prerequisites for the marriage market. Although variety of skin-tone is a continuing obsession with many Indians, the blame for it cannot be attributed entirely to Western values, for colour prejudice in India began at least with the Aryan invasions and the implantation of early

Aryan gods in Indian soil. Vedic mythology (circa 1000 BC) invariably described its demons as black, and the earliest 'Krishnas' known to Indian mythology were black-skinned demons who had their skins peeled on defeat. It was only as recently as the thirteenth century that the *Bhagavata Purana*, swiftly afterwards translated into the Hindi *Prem Sagar*, proclaimed the dark skin of Krishna beloved, created as it was from a black hair of his dark-skinned progenitor, Vishnu. In his incarnation as Krishna, the most widely adored pastoral god, Vishnu made several appearances at important junctures of his life, always deepening to the colour of a glowing raincloud during his manifestations. This honour he appears also to confer upon Krishna, the Sikh woman at the centre of Sibal's *Yatra*, together with the blue-god's confused ancestry.

A somewhat chauvinistic potted history according to Sikh chronicles, *Yatra* tells of Krishna, born the white-skinned daughter of a Greek woman married to Paramjit, a Sikh army doctor. The likelihood that she may be the daughter of her mother's Greek lover diminishes as Krishna's skin begins to darken dramatically with significant life experiences. Unlike the mythical manifestations of Vishnu, however, her deepened skin tones stay with her—a sign, presumably, that human parentage is insignificant before the primordial Mother, the land. Combining magical realism with a tendency towards dizzying time-switches, Sibal is not altogether successful in reconstructing the example of the great epics and sagas of world mythology. Despite their massiveness, these retain a form and chronology regularly reinforced either by a stable frame or by the ordered narrative of an aretological compilation. It is almost as if Sibal's novel has provided a locus for a vast store of miscellaneous idcas, information and observations jostling their way out of her mind. Dense in the extreme, the scope of *Yatra* sprawls out to encompass topics as diverse as terrorism and ecology. It shares with Deshpande's novel an alarming profusion of names and relationships which the frustratingly incomplete glossaries, chronologies and cast of characters only marginally amplify.

In summing up, it is fair to say that the five novels present a varied picture of the multi-societal culture of India. They reflect, almost invariably with great accuracy, its complexities and contradictions, exploring alternative life-styles and escape routes. The concluding message, albeit expressed in modern and international discourse, is the age-old oriental one: peace comes with recognition of one's limitations and goals. Thankfully, today this can be translated into self-esteem rather than self-abnegation. Thankfully too, these works mark a distinct move away from many Indo-Anglian novels of the 1960s and 1970s in which women writers were ill able to conceal their contempt for the characters they created.

LITERARY REVIEWS

Physician, heal thyself

A Casual Brutality

Neil Bissoondath

London: Bloomsbury, 1988. 378pp. £12.95hb

Migration from the West Indies to Canada has been on the increase in the last three decades. This broad social movement has included established writers, such as Austin Clarke and Sam Selvon, who had been among those journeying expectantly to London during the 1950s. But the generation who have continued the West Indian migration even after the celebration of political independence in the 1960s have thrown up their own wave of writers, including: the poets, Dionne Brand and Claire Harris; the poet-novelist, Marlene Phillips (*Harriet's Daughter*, 1988); Harold Ladoo (*No Pain Like This Body*, 1972 and *Yesterdays*, 1974), who was murdered while visiting relatives in Trinidad in 1978; and Neil Bissoondath (born 1955).

A Casual Brutality is set in Canada and on the imaginary island of Casaquemada ('house burn down'), the two landscapes between which his main character scuttles. In the opening chapter of the novel, a thirty-five-year-old medical practitioner, Dr Raj Ramsingh, is taking final leave of his island; and in the last chapter his plane touches down on Canadian soil, the familiar unknown where no one awaits him. In the intervening chapters, between departure and arrival, Bissoondath offers a critique of Third World countries that have failed either at independence or at nationhood; an account (by implication) of the collapse of the Trinidad economy in spite of the oil bonanza of the mid-1970s and early 1980s; and a psychological study of a particular victim of these circumstances, an Indian ill-at-ease in the corruption, violence and uncertainties of the wider island society, and equally uncomfortable with the remnants (including the extended family) of his immediate and ancestral pasts.

Casaquemada is projected as a typical Caribbean or Third World country whose failure can be traced back to those who built empires and those whose self-appointed mission was to colonise. Looking out from a fortification laboriously built by the departed powers, the narrating character sums up the imperial/colonial escapades thus:

Those men who had sweated and strained had had other more valuable lessons to teach, but they had paid only lip-service to their voiced ideals, had offered in the end but the evils of their actions, had propagated but the baser instincts, which took root and flourished so effortlessly in this world they called, with a kind of black humour, *new*.

The descriptions of landscape and landmarks, the human geography, and the economic details that give social body to the fiction obviously derive from the island of Trinidad, nowhere more obviously than in this paragraph:

[W]hen through pure luck oil became like liquid gold flowing into our coffers, we blew it. We stole it, we gave it away in bribes, we squandered it on useless projects, we exchanged it for everything . . . Economics as buying spree . . . Our leaders taught us how to blame, but not how to help ourselves. They gave us the psychology of the victim. So that when the money came we practised the politics of greed.

Those who know Trinidad may take a mournful pleasure in recognising the justness of some of the observations on the island and its leaders; those who do not know the island will respond (undistracted by what Lionel Trilling calls 'the buzz of implication') to the use of the well-known facts to create an insecure, threatening and inflammable context in a novel that is finally about enigmatic arrivals—about arrivals in a world where there is nowhere to come from, nowhere to go back to, only a series of stopovers on the way to extinction. But in the last chapter, as the plane touches down, the wounded and worried doctor sees in his flight or journey parallels with those indentured Indians who had left the famine and the dust and the desolation of an uncomfortably ancestral land for an imagined new start in worlds like Casaquemada:

I go, like my forebears, to the future, to the challenge that lies elsewhere of turning nothing into something, far from the casual brutality of collapse, far from the ruins of failure, across thousands of miles of ocean. So it has been. So it is. So it will remain.

Indians were brought to the Caribbean as indentures ('a new system of slavery') between 1838 and 1917, an attempt by the planter class to counter the negotiating strength of the free labour force—the emerging working class constituted by the newly-emancipated population. Today, descendants of indentured Indians form the majority in both Guyana and Trinidad but do not have a proportionate share of political power. In Guyana they have been virtually disenfranchised, and recent happenings in Trinidad suggest that there is too much suspicion, distrust and prejudice between Africans and Indians for Indian participation in the political process not to be attended by racial conflict. For these and other reasons, the recent emigrants to Canada include a high proportion of Indians from both Guyana and Trinidad.

A Casual Brutality can be seen, then, as an expression of the Indian diaspora or, less pretentiously, an examination of the fate of Indians in places like Trinidad and Guyana. Through a vividly realised group of supporting characters, Bissoondath represents the stasis of the oldest generation (the grandmother 'a woman set in her own foolishness, a woman determined in her fears', and the grandfather, his creative impulse spent, his store burnt in the country's rising violence, he himself descending into senility and abstraction); the nervous disorders of the young (the hysteric, Sunil Nandan, the religious fanatic, Asha, and the aggressive, vulgarly creolised Surcin); and the decadence of the extended Indian family—a source of embarrassment rather than security and sustenance, its members playing at involvement while secretly preparing for flight to safer places. The narrating character, however, is the novel's prime casualty, his personal tragedy being inseparable from that of the Indian community and of the society as a whole in which that community has become involved. But Bissoondath is not just writing about the Indian diaspora. The author intends Ramsingh's profound malaise to be a product of colonial pressures, Indian disorientation and the human situation itself.

The portrait of Ramsingh's disturbed psyche is a triumph of narrative orchestration, and of definition by comparison, contrast and scenic evocation. The author renders—though not in chronological order—the people, places, impressions and events in the three periods of Ramsingh's life; and, distinct from these, the way in which they impinge upon him and lodge in a free state in his mind. So, while the reader stubbornly constructs in sequence the early life in Casaquemada, the fourteen years in Toronto as student and doctor, and finally the three-year stretch served on the island, Ramsingh's memory shifts back and forth *across* the three periods and *within* each of them, following the logic of the character's mood and feeling.

Raj's early and persistent sense of loss (of security, of comfort, of a future) is convincingly established with the death of his parents in a car crash, when he is a baby; from this, the evasiveness, the withdrawal into self and the world of books (he has no boy days), the inability and refusal to give himself to anything or anyone (which comes first?), and the alienation from his family, and what he sees as Indian superstition and empty ritualism, are all smoothly and systematically incorporated. These attitudes continue into the Canadian period where he avoids minorities, sees no one but his aged landlady and contrives to stroke himself into a perverse cultivation of anonymity. The Casaquemadan solitary is eventually bulldozed into marriage with Jan, an unemployable arts graduate working as a waitress at the Rivera, a nightclub he frequents in the capacity of a voyeur. He is settling down into a flaccid life 'without rhythm, without crackle' when the visit of Kayso, after fourteen years, rouses his envy, while the prosperous man's invitation fires his greed: 'There's a lot to be done, and frankly, there's a lot of money to be made.' When, three years later, the Casaquemadan economy finally collapses, the multi-dimensional tensions in a hopeless and disunited society break out, and his wife and child are brutally gunned down by marauding troops. Ramsingh is shocked and contrite enough to confess that 'Self, in the end, is the prime motivation.'

This is not so much a new or absolute truth (though it does underlie many of our social transactions) as a judgement passed by the character upon his own selfishness in returning to Casaquemada. But there are times in this novel, especially in the first and last chapters, when the author seems to want to use Ramsingh to voice a negative and bleak philosophy not justified by the character's experience. This philosophy is in part what determines the fate of the character. Grappler, an old-fashioned public servant – an empty self, Bissoondath would have us believe, whose life collapses when his occupation is gone. The same character is used by the author to deliver a lengthy analysis of the evils of Casaquemada, a feature that suggests even more strongly Bissoondath's eagerness to write the novel of ideas that he may not yet be ready to accomplish. Whether this is related to the novel's lack of lyricism at moments where the logic of character and situation seems to call for it (as in the climactic reflection on the tragic fate of his ancestors on pp 312–14) it is not possible to decide on a first reading.

Yet, *A Casual Brutality* represents a technical and stylistic advance upon the author's highly praised short stories, *Digging Up the Mountains* (1986). The present book reads as if the problem of construction involved in moving from the short story to the novel form was no problem to the author at all.

KENNETH RAMCHAND

University of the West Indies

Inheritances

A Season in Rihata

Maryse Condé

Translated from the French by Richard Philcox

Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988. 192pp. £3.95pb

No Telephone to Heaven

Michelle Cliff

London: Methuen. 1988. 211pp. £10.95hb

Clarise Cumberbatch Want to Go Home

Joan Cambridge

London: The Women's Press. 1988. 201pp. £3.95pb

As different as these black women writers are—Joan Cambridge, Guyanese by birth, and now returned there after many years spent in the USA and Europe; Michelle Cliff, a Jamaican now living in the USA; and Maryse Condé, a native of Guadeloupe who, having lived in Europe and Africa, has also now returned to her native island—and as different as their works are, they have much in common. At heart, these novels review the question of how to find, or keep, a sense of identity and selfhood in a changing and potentially hostile world. Each in its own way, they also deal with the question of the African diaspora and what it means to be a black person, at home or abroad, in the communities scattered between Africa, the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

The English translation of Maryse Condé's second novel *A Season In Rihata* has recently been published, and it is to be hoped that those of her other three will follow quickly, for Condé's explorations into the legacies which history has left the black world richly deserve the wider audience that translation brings. As with her first novel, *Hèrémakhonon* (1976), *A Season In Rihata* is both a private story and a public fable of people bewildered by the tides of their private emotions and of public events around them. This is a familial story centered around Marie-Hélène, a Caribbean woman educated in Paris, now living in a West African country and happily married to Zek, the manager of one of the nation's development banks in the sleepy hinterland town of Rihata. She had married out of guilt and despair after the suicide of her sister, and is raising that sister's son along with her own daughters in a compound overshadowed by the presence of her embittered and hostile mother-in-law.

In their collective loneliness as the story opens, the community awaits the arrival of Zek's estranged younger brother, now an influential minister in the corrupt regime which oppresses them all. Madou's arrival re-opens wounds caused by burdensome secrets from Marie-Hélène's past. As the pain of their past catches up with them, it is interwoven with the tragedy of the present in a tale of the failed political intrigue of a group of freedom fighters in revolt against their government. The interweaving of these two stories ends in tragedy and continuing loneliness for them all. On every level, the unhappiness in the family mirrors the corruption in the land. Tensions between rich and poor, insiders and outsiders, the powerful and the powerless, contend with each other in public as well as in private. Through this intense drama, where generations of familial unease and years of political suffering collide in an insignificant backwater, Condé explores with finesse the loves and betrayals, loyalties and responsibilities of a microcosm of society.

In *No Telephone To Heaven*, Michelle Cliff continues the story of the central character of her first novel *Abeng* (1984). The child, Clare Savage, has grown to womanhood to

face the harsh realities of her troubled personal and social history. The result of several generations of racially mixed unions between the descendants of slaves and the descendants of slave-holders, Clare faces the question of what it means to be a colonised person historically, and personally. She is so light-skinned she could pass, as her father does in the USA, for white. Yet she is also the last of several generations of women strongly rooted in the landscape and history of Jamaica. All her life Clare faces this dichotomy between maternal and paternal inheritances. Her father, descended from plantation owners, offers her his pride in his known history, and the potential for prosperity in the USA, as an inconspicuous member of the white middle class. But born in Jamaica, raised in the USA, and educated in England, Clare learns that, despite appearances, she is black. Having been a partial stranger everywhere, including Jamaica, Clare returns to the hinterland to claim her maternal inheritance, a patch of that troubled and poverty-stricken island. But the land is going 'ruinate', a situation which serves as a commentary not only on the island and its economy but on those who are supposed to hold the place in trust.

Michelle Cliff dramatises what it means, in personal and social terms, to be from a country struggling with two forms of colonialism; the historical colonialism of British rule and the contemporary colonialism of being in the USA's backyard. There are different kinds of struggles against imperialism, and Clare in her life goes from one for civil rights in the USA, to one for a genuine independence within Jamaica. The occasion for the novel is a truck journey into the highlands in search of such independence. This is a journey to make history, and in the surprising ending to the novel Michelle Cliff delivers a devastating blow on many fronts to the very notion of 'making history'.

The languages and the form of this novel are very finely handled, as on this journey Cliff manipulates the varieties of the English language as found in Jamaica, England, and the USA, in its role as an indicator of social origins or aspirations. The truck journey is, for Clare, a journey towards liberation, and it becomes a vehicle for her story and the story of her peoples. This journey becomes a meditation as, in flashbacks which dissolve into the present only to be recalled again, Clare's recollections reveal to us the spectrum of Jamaican society, from the swimming pools of the idle rich to the dunghill shanty towns of the dispossessed. The hopelessness of their situation is captured starkly in the title, *No Telephone To Heaven*, which is also the legend on the truck upon which Clare Savage travels. When we meet her, her father is living in the USA, dispossessed of his soul, and her mother has died in Jamaica trying to reclaim her: in the end, Clare Savage is truly their offspring. The decisions she makes to claim and then transcend this inheritance, and the consequences of those decisions, comprise the story we read.

Joan Cambridge's *Clarise Cumberbatch Want to Go Home* is a truly wonderful first novel. This touching, witty, lyrical, and profound work is most striking for its superb use of the Guyanese patois in which it is written. Cambridge has a fine and deft sense of language, and proves herself a master of comedy. She has a true ear for her patois, and an adept sensitivity to the ranges of human speech in the differing emotional situations occasioned by the story of Clarise Cumberbatch. Clarise is a middle-aged Guyanese woman who arrives in New York one cold, spring morning, to look for her wandering husband. From the very opening scenes of that disturbingly familiar process through immigration and customs in New York, the city is filtered through the eyes of this generous, loving, bewildered and determined woman, to whom it represents an

alien, and ultimately alienating culture. The various contradictions of being an alien, black, and impoverished in New York City, in sharp contrast to the ideal of prosperity that it represents before arrival, are quite stunningly drawn, whether through humour, pathos, or brutal violence. Clarise is under no illusions about what it means to come from a poor island; it is, after all, poverty and her husband's infidelity that have driven them both to New York, the place of their dreams. Yet, like the other two writers, Joan Cambridge is questioning the ideas of the West and, in particular, the notion that the horn of plenty it appears to provide is everybody's paradise. Clarise has a communal world view which challenges that notion from the outset, and which sustains her through the terrible reality that New York becomes.

During Clarise's stay, Guyana remains ever present. Through the memories set against her experiences in New York, she recollects the past, and treasures the memory of her marriage, children, and close-knit community. To some extent, that community is replicated in New York as Clarise records her impressions of visitors to her friend Mavis' apartment, and party scenes of island exiles acting as armchair politicians away from home. But she must also face encounters with employment agencies and prospective employers, and a world on the streets altogether more violent, brutal and shocking than anything she has ever encountered. All this in search of Harold. Distributing his photograph everywhere she can, she spends her time caught between one wild goose chase in search of him, and another in search of a job without a green card. All ideas of prosperity in New York recede along with the figure of the fleeing husband she never finds. Though she is surrounded by the love of friends, old and new, in the end it all bewilders or disturbs her. She recognises she will never find the happiness that she thinks both Harold, or the New York which has swallowed him, represents, and simply wants to go home. She can be glad, unlike our other heroines, of the certainty that she has a home waiting for her to return to.

ABENA P A BUSIA

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Incantatory beauty

Stars of the New Curfew

Ben Okri

London: Secker & Warburg, 1988. 194pp. £10.95hb

In the penultimate story in this collection there is a perfunctory act of love between a would-be pop star and his reluctant girlfriend. He is trying to break down the girl's inner resistance: "It's good to be alive," he said with a sentimental quaver in his voice. "Who disputed it?" "No one."

Casual readers of this second volume of stories in three years might be excused for thinking that if anyone disputed the general joyousness of existence, it was Ben Okri. When his last volume, *Incidents at the Shrine*, appeared in 1986 some of its less perceptive reviewers observed that Okri seemed to possess a nose for squalor as sharp as a

retriever's nose for game. If this was true of *Incidents*, it is even truer of this collection. Okri's locale is the ghetto: that neutral, desolate terrain betwixt town and country in which the detritus of the new African societies so often winds up. His people are that detritus: the aspirant entrepreneurs, inspired con-men, drunkards and ne'er-do-wells of a paradise run to seed. His theme is their despair.

That is one way of describing Okri's achievement, though not necessarily the correct one: the evocation of dereliction. But where such a reading falls down, and where all readers will fail to follow Okri if they happen to be deaf to his particular medley of tone, is in a failure to recognise that his perception of these people and of this terrain possesses in itself nothing of the despairing. These stories are about despair, and for those unacquainted with such absolute destitution the encounter can be gruelling. In mood, however, they are closer to a series of concerto movements in which the bleak, upper tonalities are continually undermined and reproached by an impertinent ground bass, full of a sort of sombre jocularly. The squalor and hopelessness of the ghetto is here, but so is its capacity for improvisation, its mordant, facetious cunning. The title story has for its protagonist a vendor of power-drugs, the havoc of which is strangely released into his own life and those of his townsmen. The transformations thus wrought in their circumstances approximate to a variety of nightmares, but they are also oddly, quirkily beautiful, like the incandescent colours of decay in the festering townscape in Okri's earlier 'Hidden History'. We are watching the mind turning inside out, but the revealed innards have something of the gaudy brilliance of a butterfly devoured by ants.

I saw the secrets of the town dancing in the street: young men with diseases that melted their faces, beautiful young girls with snakes coming out of their ears I saw skeletons dancing with fat women I passed the town's graveyard and saw the dead rising and screaming for children. (p 129)

The character is of course hallucinating, but the hallucination has in it nothing of the self-indulgence which might mark such an episode in a work by one of Okri's European contemporaries. Such nightmares are the strange fruit of the ghetto itself, and part of its incantatory beauty. Okri is especially powerful at such moments. He is also particularly good at that syncretic progeny of African and European religion: the cultic efflorescence of the desperately believing mind. Nobody is quite as adept as he at capturing the spirit of the Nigerian urban occult: even Wole Soyinka, despite his interest, always seems to be looking down on it. Okri on the other hand seems to get right inside such ecstatic movements, and to come out on the other side having lost very little of his artistic composure.

What is the source of this particular strength? One is reminded of Okri's antecedents. It is perhaps possible to speak of two schools of Nigerian fiction, one of which has for long been in the ascendent. The first, and most frequented, is the School of Achebe, the social realism which for thirty years has cauterised the social conditions of that unfortunate country while apparently doing very little to set it to rights. The second, unduly neglected, is the School of Tutuola, and it is to this that Okri belongs. This might seem an odd statement, for Okri is a quintessentially metropolitan—nay cosmopolitan—artist, while Amos Tutuola in the eyes of his more patronising readership is no more than a country bumpkin. But this is to take the surface as all. The excellence of Tutuola lies not in the hit-and-miss quality of his language—that rather is his downfall—but in

his tapping of deep wells of mythic imagination which lie beneath the surface of modern life only to erupt at times of particular difficulty or stress, or at moments akin to the ecstatic.

It is with just such difficulty and stress, and with just such states of near-ecstasy that Okri presents us in his stories, where in consequence the wells of the mythic imagination are for ever breaking surface. Tutuola's own roots lay in that master of Yoruba folklore, D O Fagunwa, and beyond him in centuries of inspired oral story telling. It is Okri's strength that he is able to draw on such traditions without compromising anything of his fractious modernity. The effect can at times be chilling, but it can also be intoxicating.

It ought to be unnecessary to add that this is the equipment, and these are the talents of a major novelist. It is several years since Okri gave us a novel. Until he does so, he is a tiger crouching, much of his considerably quixotic power held in check. When eventually he elects to pounce, his leap will be magnificent. His audience awaits.

ROBERT FRASER

London

The greatest loneliness of all

Arabesques

Anton Shammas

Translated from the Hebrew by Vivian Eden

London: Viking/New York: Harper & Row. 1988. 263pp. £11.95hb

Many of the articles about Anton Shammas, since he burst onto the literary scene in 1986, have carried the same photograph. In it, he wears the suitably serious look of a young author (thirty-eight), but holds one hand just behind his ear, perhaps to display a more casual air, or as a sign of nervousness. Readers of *Arabesques*, the first novel by this Palestinian-Israeli who writes in Hebrew, his 'step-mother tongue', may find themselves speculating further on the hand-behind-the-ear pose. Perhaps Shammas was at that moment remembering his father, a barber who turned cobbler when the bottom fell out of the market. In the novel, when young Shammas has a haircut, the last stage involves the hair behind the ears 'offered up to the blade of the razor in his father's hand'. This memory is sparked off when an Israeli airport guard touches those very hairs as Shammas is searched on his way out of the country, and he remembers further how he, in turn, tended to his father at the end of his days, when 'the long night of slow dying lay before them, like the fading of a lantern put to shame by an electric lamp'. Such details abound in this autobiography disguised as novel, as Shammas quotes from Clive James's *Unreliable Memoirs* (1980). They help give a sense of reality in a book that hovers just this side of the fabulous.

Arabesques is a wandering tale, its main theme a search for identity. It wanders from the last century to this, introducing us to many characters from the Shammas family, some, one assumes, real and some (one hopes) invented. It wanders through the experi-

ence of Palestinian Arabs during this time. It also wanders through literary experience itself, with the author as craftsman, conscious of the history of the novel.

The main setting is the Arab Galilee village of Fassuta. Folklore and superstition are given shape in, for example, the mythical form of a rooster who guards a stone blocking the entrance to untold wealth. A crimson feather from the rooster's tail usually flutters onto the page to give the reader a clue that imagination is about to get the better of reality. The central thread in the tapestry (one of his few overworked images) is Shammas himself. He was named Anton after a cousin who died as a baby. It then turns out that the baby may have been illegally adopted by a Lebanese couple, been given the name Michael Abyad, and gone on to become an American writer. This opens the way for many coincidences, as when, for example, Shammas sees a copy of *Time* magazine with a picture of Abyad standing in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps just after the 1982 massacres. Shammas's wanderings take him to an international writer's gathering in Iowa City, where he meets an Israeli writer, Yehoshua Bar-On. In another of the novel's ironies about identity, Bar-On dreams of writing a book with a 'good' Arab hero for a change: 'This time I'm going to sculpt a well-rounded character. A nice hefty Arab, human and warm. A demitasse of cardamoned coffee, with all that it implies', with the afterthought, 'Within the boundaries of what's permissible, of course.' Bar-On wants Shammas to serve as his model. Again the distinction blurs between fiction and reality, with hints that Shammas's novel may be the outcome of Bar-On's imagination. This trick is used again, with less success, at the end of the novel, when it is hinted that Abyad, himself a wanderer in search of origins, may have written this novel.

Perhaps Shammas's greatest success is his remarkable evocation of village life, which he effects with the tenderness reserved for home:

My sense of home begins with the spoon knocking against the rim of the pot of lentil soup and spreads like ripples in the village pond and licks at the edge of the *duwara* and limns the view from the southern window and touches my skin from within. All of the houses I've lived in since then have hardly touched me

Shammas does not have a problem with home, not having lost his, although he tells the tale of those Palestinians who have lost theirs, like the villagers of nearby Deir al-Kassi, which, he laconically observes, 'later was given the Hebrew name Moshav E'lkosh'. He illustrates how Israel was superimposed on Palestine in 1948 through the simple events of everyday village life. At one point, for example, the villagers of Fassuta think their turn has come for expulsion. It had been a bad year for the crops, and they could not even afford to feed the donkey, but now that they need the beast for the long trek into exile, his uncle's wife feeds him the emergency store of barley. The Israelis accept a ransom of twenty gold pounds to let the villagers stay, and the aunt rushes to rescue the barley, only to find it gone:

She went back to the voracious donkey and began to beat him, first with blows of rage because the family's supply of barley was gone, then with blows of anger at herself, for having rushed to pay the beast for work he hadn't done, and finally with blows of stifled sobbing because of the Arabs and the Jews and the rebels and the soldiers and the wars and the refugees and pitiless Fate and poverty and her bellyful of it all, and especially because she wanted to stop beating him and couldn't.

As for Shammas's father in 1948, we find him in Haifa, having made the move from village to city at just the wrong time. He spends most of the war making a magnificent pair of shoes, aware of the responsibility shoes will have to bear:

Though my father was not to attain full refugeehood, ever since then he took care that every pair of shoes that came out of his workshop would serve its owner for many long years of walking, in rain and in heat, over stones and through mud, in their going forth and their coming hither, for if the decree of wandering passed over you the first time, no one will swear to you . . . that it will the second time.

Shammas's problem is one of identity, which homeless Palestinians, or those under occupation, and even many Palestinians living in Israel, have resolved in favour of Palestinianism. Palestine sits in their throats, lives at the tips of their fingers, expresses itself in everything they speak or write. Palestine only half sits in Shammas. He considers himself an Israeli Palestinian, hence worrying, as he would acknowledge, Israeli and Palestinian alike. He expresses the dilemma of the Palestinian born in Israel, educated in Hebrew literature, loving his 'step-mother tongue', yet only too aware of his origins and his lost country. He puts the words in Bar-On's mouth: 'I'll write about the loneliness of the Palestinian Arab Israeli, which is the greatest loneliness of all.' A Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza may be accepted by all parties concerned as the most practical solution, but it will not help Shammas. Thus, in his political writings, he opposes the Israeli Law of Return, which enables all Jews around the world to become Israelis, and insists that Israel must become the state of its citizens rather than the State of the Jewish People. This stance has, so far, won him few friends. Among Palestinians, perhaps it is because he writes in the passive sense (a villager's passivity?), that what is past is past. Yet, the real greatness of the Palestinian struggle is surely the refusal to accept an imposed past, in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles.

Shammas's identity problem has resulted in a missing link. He writes powerfully about the village, where his identity is secure, and fits comfortably into the world of literature, which is open to those who can write as he does, but he is shaky over the country/nation that lies between village and globe. He quotes Jewish and international authors, not Arab ones. An indication, perhaps, of a spurned heritage—particularly considering the existence of a master Arab writer close to home: Emile Habibi, who, no matter what Shammas might think of his politics, produced the magnificent *The Secret Life of Saeed: the pessimist* (1985).^{*} Yet, Shammas is nothing if not aware. As he writes about himself and his mentor, Uncle Yusef in *Arabesques*: 'He was well aware that his being was flawed and incomplete, like my own, and the tale, in either of its versions, does not have sufficient power to restore the earth pulled from under our feet.' The tale cannot restore a lost identity, or create a new one: other answers must be found to the question posed by Shammas.

NADIA HIJAB

London

Founding father

From the Ivory Tower: a critical study of Tawfiq al-Hakim

Paul Starkey

London: Ithaca Press (for the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford). 1987. 260pp. £18.00hb

^{*} Reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 9(4) October 1987, pp 1405-9.

Had Tawfiq al-Hakim been living when the Swedish Academy decided at last that it was time to confer the world's most coveted literary prize on an Arab author, they would have found it very difficult to bypass him for any other writer; even if it were someone of the high calibre of Naguib Mahfouz. Al-Hakim belongs to the generation of 'the founding fathers' of modern Arabic letters. Born in 1898, he was the last to depart of that generation of Egyptian literary giants born at the turn of the century and destined to lead Arabic literature, as if by a magic wand, from the middle ages straight into the twentieth century.

A writer of immense versatility, al-Hakim* is best known as the true founder of the dramatic art in the Arabic language; an art in infantile existence for only some seventy years before him and which was to reach full maturity at his hands. The range of his dramatic exercises is dazzling: from social plays to philosophic *pièces à thèse* and from reinterpretations of classical themes to experiments in the theatre of the absurd. Many of his writings being of universal relevance to mankind, he is luckily among the most widely translated Arab authors. He is unfortunately, in common with others, published by specialist, small-circulation firms; a fact which denies the Western reading public at large access to his work.

From the Ivory Tower is therefore a most welcome publication; all the more so as it is only the second book on al-Hakim in English, the first being *Tawfiq al-Hakim: playwright of Egypt* (1979) by Richard Long. As Long's book was more of an impassioned plea for Western recognition of an Egyptian genius than a controlled work of literary criticism, there is a sense in which we can say that Dr Starkey's book is indeed the first methodic and near-comprehensive assessment of al-Hakim in English. It is unfortunate, however, that, though published nearly ten years after Long's book, it has failed to take account of al-Hakim's publications during the last fifteen years or so up to his death in 1987. The reason, we are told, is the fact that the book is based on a doctoral thesis submitted in 1978-79.

To have succeeded in imposing order on a voluminous output of some one hundred plays, four novels, scores of short stories and hundreds of essays covering every possible subject under the sun is in itself a task for which Dr Starkey merits the warmest congratulations. This vast literary produce is perceptively and painstakingly analysed by him to its underlying intellectual preoccupations. Thus, an essential romanticism which seems to favour the heart over the mind, and a constant tug-of-war between reality and imagination, are seen to be at the root of al-Hakim's vision of life. Possible European influences on his work are usefully alluded to (though this is by no means a comparative study), and while the approach is mainly thematic, the author essentially being interested in defining al-Hakim's system of thought, matters of artistic technique are adequately addressed within the scope of the book.

A valuable study as it is, *From the Ivory Tower* is neither devoid of points of contention nor infelicities of expression. Here is one example: in the course of commenting on al-Hakim's play, *al-Malik 'Udīb* (a reinterpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*), he writes 'The play raises yet again the question how a writer who opts for a make-believe world of half-truths in preference to reality can be seriously regarded as an intellectual' (p 84). I do not know what Dr Starkey's definition of a 'serious intellectual' is, but if it is too stringent to encompass a writer of al-Hakim's stature, it is difficult to think who

* See *Third World Quarterly* 10(2) April 1988, pp 949-60, for a Literary Profile of Tawfiq al-Hakim by M M Badawi.

would qualify. More serious, however, than the scholarly arrogance exhibited by such commentary is the error of judgement underlying it; for the author obviously confuses two issues here: the man and his art. It is not the quality of al-Hakim's vision as an artist (whether it is soberly realistic or steeped in romanticised idealism, whether it is a vision with which we concur or not) that makes an 'intellectual' of him. Rather it is the fact that he can render such a vision in art.

One would have liked to dismiss the above remark as a passing slip of the pen, but unfortunately the book is not lacking in the likes of it. Thus al-Hakim is taken to task over his plays of social criticism for their 'lack of constructiveness and seeming unwillingness to do more than depict an existing state of affairs . . .' (p 161). As if a creative writer were a social reformer or a politician expected to offer practical solutions for social problems! Adjectives such as 'superficial', 'grotesque', 'silly' and 'tortuous' are liberally, and often thoughtlessly, applied to the work of al-Hakim, and whole plays highly commended by other critics (such as *Fate of a Cockroach*) are lightly dismissed in a sentence or two. Dr Starkey again misses the point when he criticises al-Hakim's characters for often being 'symbols for intellectual concepts' (p 206), rather than fully-fledged human beings; such characterisation is of course normal in a thesis play (*pièce à thèse*) or novel—a recognised art form. And where would such criticism leave a great many plays by George Bernard Shaw, or a novel such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954)?

In his conclusion, Dr Starkey poses the question 'Has he [al-Hakim] secured for himself a permanent place in the history of the development of modern Arabic literature? Or is he a charlatan, an intellectual light-weight whose reputation and influence are likely to be short-lived?' (p 226) The tone of the question is itself suggestive of the likely answer he supplies, all the more so because the author is able to mention only two plays and one novel by al-Hakim as possibly being of lasting value.

It is perhaps a testimony to the variety, complexity and enduring fascination of al-Hakim's art that of the two books on him in English the first is over-enthusiastic, while the second is over-critical. One can only hope that the third, when it arrives, will be more balanced.

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Unequivocally feminist

The Prizegiving

Aysel Özakin

Translated from the Turkish by Celia Kerslake

London: The Women's Press, 1988. 175pp. £4.95pb

Written in 1980, this novel may be said to be the first unequivocally feminist work of fiction in Turkish. As such, it has had the privilege of being translated into English and brought out by a prominent publishing company, while translations of other Turkish fiction of considerable merit (apart from the works of Yashar Kemal) have yet to

receive the nod of approval from publishers' readers. That the author, Aysel Özakin, was already translated and published in West Germany, where she has been resident for many years now, and where there is certainly more interest in aspects of 'Turkishness', was no doubt instrumental in introducing her to an international readership.

The original title, *Genç Kız ve Ölüm* (The Young Girl and Death) reflects the oppressive sadness that hangs over life as a woman for the heroine, Nuray Ilkin, from the enigmatic suicide of her mother, a schoolteacher, when Nuray was only nine, to the dangers imminent in the future of her young daughter, a dedicated left-wing student activist. The title in translation, on the other hand, draws attention to the central event in the novel, the awarding of a prize for Nuray's first work of fiction. Nuray's novel, which is autobiographical, is an account of her relationship with Cemil, her former husband, and her liberation from the bonds of marriage. Excerpts from it complement and punctuate the overall narrative, providing a beginning and end, as well as a framework within which Özakin can expand on Nuray as a woman and as a novelist. A major concern in the book is the act of writing, which is seen as a means of articulating the experiences of liberation and of coming to terms with its consequences.

Nuray's pursuit of freedom and fulfilment is genuine and impressive as a modern Turkish woman's story, yet as a work of fiction it does not quite come alive, except during Nuray's encounter with her former husband, and for brief moments during the prizegiving event in Ankara. Nuray says little, rarely engages in dialogue or in a confrontation. Most of the time she comes across as a somewhat timid, humourless observer of her 'self' in a suspicious and repressive society, rather than as a woman actually experiencing frustration, loneliness and fear in particular, fleshed-out situations. Perhaps this is intentional on the author's part in order to underline Nuray's isolation. For Nuray has no friends; despite her desire, when she first rebelled against her husband, to be 'among people, and with people' (p 73), she leads an unnaturally solitary life, her sense of insecurity heightened by the precarious conditions of unrest typical of the 1970s in Turkey.

And yet Nuray, who appears to be an unremarkable heroine, is in fact a remarkable woman: not only has she done something quite extraordinary in divorcing a loving husband, without any significant means of supporting herself, and assumed the responsibility of bringing up her daughter, but she has written a book about such female experience. Ironically, she has also won recognition in the form of a prize from the establishment whose values she set out to question. The establishment, or more precisely a prominent holding company that has awarded the prizes for the arts, eyes Nuray with a mixture of curiosity and suspicion, while Nuray in turn absorbs this world of socialites and would-be intellectuals—a world that had previously been entirely alien to her—in discomfort and contempt. Nuray's outlook on life is perhaps too earnest and, at times, naive. Her final confrontation with her former husband Cemil, in which he accuses her of having 'lost' her 'womanhood' and 'found' herself 'a personality' (p 159), does not bring about a fundamental change in this attitude, but only makes Nuray painfully aware of what she has not been able to attain (such as love, happiness, satisfaction with her body) despite her pursuit of personal freedom.

The fictional discourse, particularly in the main narrative, is dominated by an earnestness that is a feature of the modern Turkish novel of social commitment, and one that may appear somewhat clichéd for readers of contemporary Western fiction. It

rings true in Nuray's Turkish circumstances, however, because her rejection of a safe but dull domestic life coincides not unexpectedly with what is essentially a political decision: that of working for a left-wing journal, or as Nuray puts it later, 'the idea of contributing to the great tissue of humanity, instead of the little embroidery frame of womanhood' (p 161). It is also to the author's credit that she allows for disillusionment and self-questioning on Nuray's part, as well as justifiable criticism directed at her individualism from two opposite poles: her former husband who has turned his back on the leftist movement and her daughter who is dedicated to it.

Celia Kerslake's prefatory note to her fluent and very readable translation is useful in providing the unfamiliar reader with precise information on political turning-points in contemporary Turkish history, such as the military interventions of 27 May 1960 and 12 March 1971, which have particular significance in Nuray's story. Unfortunately, the footnotes to the narrative—informative though they may be—hardly seem necessary, and tend to treat a work of fiction as if it were essentially a sociological document.

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Simple martyrs and unsung heroes

The Mountain Village

Chun-Chan Yeh

London: Faber & Faber. 1988. 280pp. £11.95hb

The Open Fields

Chun-Chan Yeh

Translated from the Chinese by Michael Sheringham

London: Faber & Faber. 1988. 280pp. £11.95hb

Chinese fiction presents notorious problems to most contemporary Anglo-Saxon critics, problems perhaps compounded by the dearth of good translations, as well as by its unfamiliar ideological and aesthetic content.

The seminal Chinese writers of the period 1919–49 (Lu Xun, Ding Ling, Ba Jin and Shen Congwen) are known to Western readers largely through their presence in works of social history, such as Jonathan Spence's *Gate of Heavenly Peace* (1981), or through the occasional academic anthology. In the period from the revolution of 1949 until the post-Mao era, contemporary Chinese fiction was seldom published in the West, and the little that was was immediately dismissed as doctrinaire, as being trapped in Soviet-inspired ideologies of socialist realism. Even the classics of this period, such as Yang Mo's *Song of Youth* (1958, translated 1964), have only recently appeared in translations published in China. The few Chinese writers to be published in the West were usually

bilingual, self-exiled 'white' Chinese, such as Lin Yutang and Eileen Chang, whose fluent, facile prose fictions were also in their own way didactic; anti-Communist propaganda disguised as fiction is surely as manipulatively doctrinaire as anything that was appearing in China during that period. Following the post-Mao thaw, a few works of fiction to appear in translation have earned for their authors (such as Zhang Xiangliang and Bei Dao) reputations based not so much on their literary prowess as on their stance of a supposed radical individualism more in keeping with current Western tastes. The new dynamic generation of critical realists to emerge recently, such as Gu Hua, Deng Youmei, Feng Jicai and Wang Anyi, is entirely unknown in Britain; the one writer to break the cultural barrier, Zhang Jie, has really only come to our attention in her capacity as a feminist writer, though she is one of the leading voices of her generation.

The recent re-appearance of the first two volumes of Chun-Chan Yeh's masterly trilogy, *Quiet are the Mountains*, may yet redress the balance, though the addition of a good introduction to Yeh's life and work would have made his writing more accessible to an anglophone readership. Born in 1914, Yeh mediates the gap between several generations of Chinese writers: a contemporary, albeit a decade younger, of Ding Ling and Ba Jin, he has written his major works only in the last decade. Yeh, who became editor of the prestigious Beijing English-language monthly, *Chinese Literature* (still an invaluable index to the best writing of the past), was heavily criticised during the Cultural Revolution, subjected to physical indignities and forced to work at the lowliest menial tasks. Unlike most of his younger contemporaries of the 'wounded generation', he has not written of his experiences of those years. (Interested readers are referred to the last volume of Han Suyin's magnificent memoirs, *Phoenix Harvest* (1980), in which Yeh plays a leading part.) These years nevertheless served as a gestation period in which Yeh planned and drafted his first trilogy, *The Land*. Written shortly after the Cultural Revolution, and yet to be translated into English, *The Land* chronicles the rise of rural rebellion in the early years of this century, and the consequent slow erosion of feudalism in the last years of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). With the commencement of this work he seems to have committed himself to the task of recording, in his rich, powerful novels, the history of China in the twentieth century, largely from the perspective of the rural population so essential to the events that broke down the feudal bastions of centuries. Yeh's project should inspire several generations of Chinese writers to direct towards their nation's fascinating past the attention it richly deserves.

Yeh differs from his contemporaries in two important respects: his skilled adaptation of the techniques of classical Chinese narrative, and the enormity of the canvas he employs to exercise his preference for longer fictional forms. An admirer of the nineteenth-century Russian and French realists, Yeh's emphasis on exact reconstruction of detail may owe a little to Gustave Flaubert, but the real source of his inspiration is to be found in many forms of traditional Chinese literature: the classical lyric, the restraint and control of the Tang dynasty tale of the seventh century, the vernacular novel (*The Scholars* by Wu Jingzi (1701-54) is Yeh's particular favourite). Praising the economy and precision of the traditional story, Yeh points to the origins of most Chinese fiction in folklore and orature. His own prose reflects this panoply of techniques, intertwining to great effect the imagistic virtuosity of verse with the rustic tradition of storytelling. *Quiet are the Mountains*, narrated in the first person by the adolescent

Chunsheng, is interspersed with folktales and allusions to myth, ritual and legend, and constantly dissolves into other first-person accounts: Yeh thus includes counter-perspectives to create a many-layered narrative in the Chinese manner.

A grand irony, and a fact conveniently over-looked by a new generation of English critics, is that *The Mountain Village*, the first volume of the trilogy, was written in English, in Britain, where it was published to critical acclaim in 1947. Yeh actually began his career in England with the publication of a volume of short stories, *The Ignorant and the Forgotten* (1946), which, like its successor, takes as its subject the lives and experiences of the rural peasantry, while presenting portraits of scholars, soldiers and courtesans. Often described as 'artless', Yeh's English prose is subtle and highly crafted; he carefully, consciously evokes both the imagery and the cadences of Chinese poetry. If Yeh had remained in exile, he may well have become a Chinese Vladimir Nabokov, a master of the English novel. Alternatively, robbed of his Chinese inspiration he might have retreated into academic or journalistic cynicism, or into silence like Eileen Chang; dissidence, too, has a short span if deprived of its context. But Yeh's hostility was to the reigning Kuomintang regime, not to the communists, for whose radical reforms he had a deep, if not always unquestioning, sympathy. In 1949, at the peak of his career, he returned to China, having completed his second English-language novel, *They Fly South*, which he describes as a fantasy in the mode of the traditional Chinese romance.

Yeh resumed the writing of his second trilogy in 1984, in his native language. It is to the credit of Yeh's translator that, while it would be impossible to emulate the melodious qualities of Yeh's English prose, he effects a seamless transition. The second volume of the trilogy, *The Open Fields*, picks up the threads of the preceding novel, continuing the stories of the adolescent Chunsheng, his family and friends. Structurally, *The Open Fields* is the more complex work, in composition and execution; *The Mountain Village* is at once more subtle and spontaneous; focusing on the small joys and sorrows that shape the lives of Yeh's mostly illiterate protagonists. Each episode has the ring of authentic personal experience; Yeh has evidently drawn much of his material from memories of his native Dabai mountains. Beginning in the mid-1920s, the novel concerns the slow passing of a way of life and a set of values eroded by the events that were to transform the history of a nation. Caught up in the accelerating struggle between landlords and landless peasants, slowly awakened to the possibilities of revolution through sheer, brutal need, Chunsheng arrives at the brink of an uneasy and premature adulthood. Yeh transposes the Chinese countryside into the English language with great beauty, and introduces a memorable community of characters caught in the struggle between the new ideologies and the old peasant superstitions: a Taoist priest, a virtuous Confucian widow, an opportunistic, greedy, village scold, a number of idealistic intellectuals from the bourgeoisie who sacrifice their lives to propagate elementary Marxism; and most notably, the storyteller, Lao Liu, whose progress from local lovesick vagabond to committed revolutionary propagandist represents the awakening political consciousness of the dispossessed peasant.

The Open Fields revives several of these characters, including Lao Liu, whose observations provide an impromptu metafictional commentary throughout the novels, debating the need for literature to adapt itself to the ideological requirements of a period of upheaval, and to serve as a source of information for its readers. In keeping with this collective, revolutionary spirit, *The Open Fields* is a bolder work than its predecessor.

more brightly lit and presented on a far wider stage. The maturing perceptions of its narrator contribute a higher level of political insight and debate to the novel. Yeh's commitment to historical authenticity is reflected in his skilled use of polyphony; an array of characters—scholars, peasants, landlords and soldiers—tell their own stories, providing the counter-perspectives that enliven Chunsheng's account. The act of telling is a bond of solidarity, and solidarity—between friends, relations and even lovers—is the deepest emotion portrayed in this novel.

The nature of Yeh's task in chronicling this tumultuous period and the terseness of his first-person narrative add a severity sometimes verging on coldness to *The Open Fields*, in contrast to the gentle lyricism of *The Mountain Village*. Readers accustomed to the standard props of Western fiction, with its emphasis on introspection, will have to adjust themselves to Yeh's reliance on dramatisation, monologue and documentation, drawn from an oral tradition. With his controlled use of correspondences, Yeh brings *The Open Fields* to an epiphanic conclusion, but his metaphors of hope—a male child born in winter, visions and portents of spring—fade in the third volume of the trilogy, published in Chinese in 1986.

A Distant Journey, to be published in English in 1989, is the most stirring dramatic of the three novels, and depicts the defeats and betrayals within the ranks of the revolutionaries, the senseless sacrifice of some of their finest women and men and the marginalisation of others, as well as the barbarism of the Kuomintang troops determined to wipe out all traces of revolutionary activity from the rural hinterlands of China.

Yeh's literary achievement, quite apart from his technical expertise, rests on his commitment to remembering and resurrecting the simple martyrs and unsung heroes of his country. A discerning witness to this tumultuous century, he has reached into the past beyond his own memory in *The Land*; in *Quiet are the Mountains* he reminds the younger generations of the great toll paid in lives to achieve the freedom from hunger and want which was the true goal of the revolution. Yeh has been mistakenly read by some English Sinologists who have compared his work to that of the writers of the Cultural Revolution, whose works have fallen into disrepute, tainted as they are by Jiang Qing's aesthetic doctrines. Some good writers, notably Hao Ran, did emerge from this period, but their works, characterised by lush imagery and repetitive didacticism, are markedly different from Yeh's restrained, sober methods, with their emphasis on truths and doubts beyond sloganeering and theorising.

The haunting, tragic power of *Quiet are the Mountains* is at variance with the sunny optimism advocated by the Jiang Qing clique; while Yeh deals with history he is equally concerned, as a writer, with displacement, loss, poverty and the slow, painful acquisition of maturity. It does not seem coincidental that Yeh did not write during those years in which the closures of socialist realism and the doctrines of the novel as tract were propagated. Yeh can be read as one of those inspiring figures from the Third World, who have learnt and discarded the lessons of Western literature, and are now revitalising and rewriting their own histories and traditions while recording the testimonies of their times. Yeh has himself described *Quiet are the Mountains* as an epic poem; beginning with miniature painted landscapes, his work has also come to resemble those Chinese scrolls, which, when unfolded, open to reveal vast panoramas.

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Unreliable narrators

The Tunnel

Ernesto Sábato

Translated from the Spanish by Margaret Sayers Peden

London: Jonathan Cape. 1988. 138pp. £10.95hb

A Plan for Escape

Adolfo Bioy-Casares

Translated from the Spanish by Suzanne Jill Levine

Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press. 1988. 116pp. \$7.50pb

The Tunnel (1948), the first novel of one of Argentina's most distinguished modern writers, is the tale of a painter, Juan Pablo Castel, who becomes obsessed with Maria Iribarne after he sees her viewing one of his paintings at an exhibition in Buenos Aires. The painting is called 'Motherhood', and represents the figure of a woman and her child. Set into the corner of the picture is a smaller one of a woman gazing contemplatively out to sea. This aspect of the painting has been overlooked by critics (whom Castel holds in almost fanatical contempt) and Castel becomes convinced that only Maria shares and understands the deep sense of solitude he was trying to convey there. After wandering through Buenos Aires in the obscure hope of finding the woman again, he does eventually meet Maria, and a tortured love affair begins. Juan Pablo soon begins to suffer agonies of jealousy because the woman is married and also appears to have another lover. His suspicions and his unstable nature drive him to madness and, after destroying the painting, 'Motherhood', he murders Maria, 'the one person who could have understood me'.

Castel is an example of an unreliable narrator, for reality is presented solely through his intensely neurotic and distorted viewpoint. A consistent trait of his character is to subject his experience to a relentless and specious logical analysis. Once, in despair at his failure to win Maria for himself, he gets drunk and takes home a prostitute he finds in a waterfront bar. She smiles at him in a way that reminds him of Maria smiling. The smile is one of deceit. The woman is a prostitute: therefore Maria is a prostitute. Thus, Castel becomes lost in his own syllogistic labyrinths.

He is an alienated figure, isolated from society by his warped perceptions and inability to make sense of human relationships. He finds most human beings abhorrent, not least himself, and as he ponders his life in the prison cell from which he narrates the novel he declares: 'For me memory is a glaring light illuminating a sordid museum of shame.' His sense of alienation is internalised by a sequence of dreams. In the first he is in a dark house in search of an elusive memory of childhood, and experiences a mixed sensation of yearning and of fear. When he awakes he identifies the house with Maria, and his unconscious experience thus reflects his ambivalent attitude towards Maria as mother and lover. The second, more terrifying dream, has Castel visiting the home of an acquaintance and finding himself transformed into a giant and grotesque bird, a fact to which the rest of the company remains oblivious. Thus, a Freudian representa-

tion of Castel's condition is combined with a frightening variation on the predicament of Gregor Samsa, who wakes up to find himself transformed into an insect, in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1916). Castel's final disillusionment and despair come to him with the realisation that he has been alone all along, that his life has been a tunnel separated from the lives of other people, including Maria: 'After all there was only one tunnel, dark and solitary: mine, the tunnel in which I had spent my childhood, my youth, my entire life.'

For all the resonances of Sigmund Freud and Franz Kafka, Castel is perhaps more than anything an existentialist character, driven to despair by his failure to find authenticity in a hostile universe. The reader familiar with Albert Camus's *L'Etranger* (1942) will be struck by the similarities between the characters of Meursault and Castel. The latter's first name (Jean-Paul?) is another hint towards the French existentialists, not to mention the fact that Marie is the name of Meursault's girlfriend, and that at one point Maria mentions that she is reading a novel by Sartre. Perhaps such a melting pot of ingredients dramatising the metaphysical anguish of twentieth-century Man will make the book seem heavy-handed to today's reader, and one is bound to say that the dialogue often seems wooden and ponderous – not the fault of the translator. It remains, nevertheless, a stimulating and intriguing novel, and its revival in a very competent translation is to be welcomed.

Written three years earlier by Sábato's fellow Argentine, Adolfo Bioy-Casares, *A Plan for Escape* has probably survived the test of time even better. Outside Latin American letters, Bioy is probably associated most of all with Jorge Luis Borges, for their numerous collaborations, including their cerebral parodies of detective fictions under the pseudonym, Bustos Domecq. *A Plan for Escape* is a good reminder for anyone who needs it that Bioy is an accomplished and exceptionally imaginative storyteller in his own right.

In this novel we are again confronted with an unreliable narrator, or even two; for the story is told in large part by one Antoine Brissac, who reconstructs with impossible omniscience the 'facts' relating to the adventures of his nephew, Henri Nevers, in French Guiana, from a set of rambling and distraught letters sent to him by the nephew. Nevers has been sent to the colony for a year following a vaguely explained family disgrace. He installs himself on Royal Island to view Devil's Island, to which he has mysteriously been prohibited access by the governor, Pierre Castel. The island has been partly camouflaged with paint, and Nevers learns that Castel is also painting, in a bizarre fashion, the cells of the three prisoners held on the island.

After various investigations and expeditions to Devil's Island, Nevers uncovers the governor's secret. Castel has, by means of operations on the prisoners and changes to the physical appearance of their cells, succeeded in altering their sensory responses to the external world. He has made the prisoners 'born again to the world', and has created access to an infinite number of realities. As Castel explains: 'We can describe the world as a group of symbols capable of expressing anything; by merely altering the calibration of our sense, we can read another word in that natural alphabet.'

Castel is a Frankenstein whose project goes wildly wrong. But there is something tragically and diabolically pointless about the plan in the first place. The different worlds evoked by the prisoners in their painted cells are only mental representations of other islands, other limitations. The multiple functions of the island as symbol in the novel point up this notion of insularity, limited perspective, and the futility of man's

aspirations to dominate and *know* the external universe. It is tempting to speculate that, had he ever written a novel, this is the kind of complex, suspenseful and ingenious intellectual fantasy that we might have expected from Borges. It is greatly to Bioy-Casares's credit that he sustains many of the qualities of a Borges *ficción* throughout this short novel.

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Anecdotal history

View of Dawn in the Tropics

Guillermo Cabrera Infante

Translated from the Spanish by Suzanne Jill Levine

London/Boston: Faber & Faber, 1988. 163pp. £10.95hb

The only continuity in Guillermo Cabrera Infante's writing is that he is a writer. Apart from this fact, it is hard to establish a connection between, for example, *View of Dawn in the Tropics*, which was originally published in Spanish in 1974 (with a first US translation in 1977), and *La Habana para un Infante Difunto*, published in 1979 (translated as *Infante's Inferno* in 1985). To add a twist to his bio-bibliography, *A View of Dawn in the Tropics* was the original title for *Tres Tristes Tigres* (1965) translated as *Three Trapped Tigers* (1980), when it was entered for a Spanish publisher's fiction award.

A View of Dawn in the Tropics, to which, in its present version, fifty pages of vignettes and short anecdotes - in one instance as short as two lines—have been added since the first printing, reaches the English-reading public fourteen years after publication in Spain. If this number of years were to be considered in their relation to the distance between Latin America and British publishers, it would be found that a delay of a decade-and-a-half for a book in Spanish to travel between South Kensington, in London, where Cabrera Infante has lived since 1965, to Madrid and back to London, is just about right. Such is the distance between Latin America and the English language.

In literary history, this book forms a trough in Cabrera Infante's writing. It came between the exuberance, noise and longing of *Three Trapped Tigers*, in which exile from youth and home are presented with the enjoyment of recollection, and *Infante's Inferno*. The latter came at the time of a long illness and, while it is still exuberant in its rich originality, it is also bitter and grey, and resentful of the passage of time.

A View of Dawn in the Tropics is more relaxed. It is an anecdotal history of Cuba, from its beginnings as a rock that came out of the ocean, to the present-day post-revolutionary state. Although written in the early 1970s, it still reads well in the context of a Cuba thirty years after the revolution, led by a sixty-two-year-old Fidel Castro, who is still a national hero but has faded as an international figure. This is not to say that the text will otherwise seem dated but, because of the nature of the book, the occasional journalistic reminder to help with scenes and settings helps to illustrate

some of the writing. Cabrera Infante, once a magazine editor in Havana, and later a diplomat, broke with Castro in 1965.

His is not a book of historical fiction, although it is an assembly of historical and political details, deployed in the manner of fictional narrative to make a point. From the earliest days of the Spanish colonisation of Cuba, through the rebellions by brave men against Spanish domination in the nineteenth century, to almost direct control by the USA in the twentieth, and finally to Fidel Castro's regime, there is a gallery of generals, successful and unsuccessful rebels who become commanders, governors, and dictators. The point which Cabrera Infante sets out to make is that all such leaders, generals and dictators, however different and in whatever way they are motivated, are ultimately all the same. All dictators, however noble their ideals, deteriorate into just one prototype dictator. In every one of them there grows the same streak, the same desire, to achieve unquestioned rule, to dictate the rules.

This might seem rather unfair to the sociologist and the political scientist, as indeed it did when Cabrera Infante wrote a long article on cultural repression in Cuba in the *London Review of Books* in June 1981. That anecdotal record of the writer's experience and memories in Havana prompted strong complaints from people more sympathetic to Cuba's evolution since 1959. Yet, because Cabrera Infante is such an excellent writer, the article read far better than what may well have been firmly grounded and documented complaints.

The same applies to this book; it reads very well, even if it might offend most disciplines of historical research and analysis. The anecdotes and vignettes are subject to individual appraisal. For this reviewer there are numerous instances where the narrative, at times constructed as though it were following a museum guide who is explaining a large picture of some event in history, seemed to have been written for a film script rather than for a book. However, a North American historian and academic wrote to Cabrera Infante reporting that he had enjoyed reading his volume of poetry. There is a temptation to find the faces and names to fit the vignettes, but this requires an academic knowledge of Cuba's history.

This method of representing history by means of the vignette has also been used by other Latin Americans with varying degrees of success. The most effective was the Uruguayan writer and journalist, Eduardo Galeano, in his *Days and Nights of Love and War* (1978, translated in 1983). But while Galeano's makes good 'eye-witness writing', it does not have any qualities as durable literature. What saves *A View of Dawn in the Tropics* is Cabrera Infante's great talent for writing, with his humour and his capacity for giving scenes, any scene, a cinematic brilliance. None the less, a minor book by a major author.

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London

Wasafiri

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FEATURE REVIEWS

The struggle for Afghanistan

Anthony Hyman

The Tragedy of Afghanistan

Raja Anwar

Translated from the Urdu by Khalid Hasan

London/New York: Verso. 1988. 286pp. £17.95hb

War in Afghanistan

Mark Urban

London: Macmillan. 1988. 248pp. £29.50hb/£9.95pb

Afghanistan: the great game revisited

Edited by Rosanne Klass

New York: Freedom House. 1987. 520pp. \$19.95pb

It is easy to disagree with the publisher's boast that *The Tragedy of Afghanistan* is 'the first authoritative account of what really happened in Afghanistan under Taraki, Amin and Karmal'. Raja Anwar's book has distinct merits, but it is very far from being authoritative on key aspects of Afghanistan's modern history. On the power struggle within the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), both before and especially since the Saur revolution, Anwar is indeed highly informative and often plausible, yet hardly the best source. He comes across in this book as a disillusioned but far from detached observer of the tragi-comedy which evolved in Kabul.

The Pakistani political activist, Raja Anwar, came to the Afghan capital in the wake of General Zia-ul-Haq's coup in Pakistan in 1977. He came with some other militants of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and the two young sons of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who took charge of the Al-Zulfikar terrorist organisation from exile. Anwar is reticent about this and other intriguing aspects of his Afghan years. Though Anwar roundly condemns Western writers for their ignorance of Afghan society, more than a few assertions betray his own superficial understanding, or possibly his Kabul-centred bias. Anwar's description of the country's ethnic and sectarian divisions tends to the simplistic. Of the Shia Muslim minority, for example, he wrongly includes the Aimaqs, but omits to mention the Heratis, also failing to distinguish imami (or Twelver) Shias from the Ismailis of Afghanistan. Again, Anwar exaggerates Soviet influence before 1978 in such areas as Afghan higher education and training, for ex-

ample, where the USA, West Germany and France were also important. Some of his assertions about recent distortions of history are curious. One does not know what to make of his bizarre assertion that there is 'compelling evidence' that the last will and testament of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan 'was penned not in 1901 but in 1980'. Certainly, Anwar is no professional historian (for better or worse), rather an articulate witness to, and victim of, a tragic period of Afghanistan's modern history. Not for nothing is the book's subtitle 'a first-hand account'.

Originally written in Urdu (and translated into lively English by Khalid Hasan), this book reveals its origins in conversations in Kabul's Pul-e-Charkhi prison and Kabul itself in the critical years from 1979 to January 1984. This is arguably its strength. There is, however, too much reliance placed on stories told in justification, quite as much as in explanation, of past policies and deeds done by disgraced leaders and members of the Khalq faction of the PDPA. Anwar often seems to have taken at face value what Afghan prisoners and political activists told him, without sifting dubious theories and accusations from authentic ones. The notes to the book, though extensive, reveal that the writer, now living in West Germany, is not aware of many objective and well-informed books and studies written on the Afghan political economy, whether in English translation, German, French or other languages. Often he presents details which are rather well known (for example, the workings of the Kabul money bazaar), as if they were his own new discoveries. And a harsh critic could complain, with some justice, that what is good in this book is not new, and what is new is often not good.

Claimed to provide a scholarly analysis of Afghanistan's politics, Anwar's book centres rather on the murderous rivalries within the PDPA, which as he maintains wrecked what might have been a successful revolution from above, if only implemented by more capable and less brutal leaders. Somewhat surprising, but surely significant, is Anwar's reliance on, and praise of, a curious book by Beverley Male (*Revolutionary Afghanistan*, 1982), because this is a stridently argued, simplistic justification of the record in power of Hafizullah Amin's Khalq faction. Anwar's analysis gives a much fuller and less partisan account of the in-fighting within the PDPA than does Male.

It is unfortunate that Anwar gives very few details of his experiences in Pul-e-Charkhi prison, where, he says, he was 'perhaps the "freest" of its inmates'. He agrees that this is in itself 'a vast and fascinating subject', but does not promise a further book about it.

War in Afghanistan is a detailed study of the military contest by the defence correspondent of *The Independent* (London). It describes and analyses year by year - up to July 1986 - the shifting Soviet strategy and tactics used against an Afghan guerrilla resistance which he shows is still very chaotic and in many areas poorly organised and led. Mark Urban writes that although the war

proved more frustrating and much more difficult than the Soviet armed forces had anticipated, Soviet campaigns were efficiently conducted. He concludes that, as an institution, the Soviet army is a good learner.

The book inevitably concentrates rather narrowly on military aspects of the struggle. The author's judgements and opinions about the conflict are largely confined to brief chapters at the opening and end of his book. He is wary of the foreign backing and sympathy given the Afghan *mujahedin*, though he admits, 'their moral case against an invading army cannot be faulted'. Urban is extremely concerned over the anti-Soviet rationale behind the foreign aid given the Afghan resistance. He casts a harsh light on the military and political abilities alike of most of the guerrilla fronts and exile parties. The taking by guerrillas of many army bases as well as other developments inside Afghanistan in 1988 suggest to many observers that the PDPA regime's hold on the loyalties of its conscript army and paramilitary forces is still very shaky. This calls into question Urban's uncritical acceptance of Soviet successes in the complex process of rebuilding the Afghan army and creating paramilitary forces. What Urban states about the war's political aspects is often dogmatic and sometimes rather simplistic. He does give, though, a shrewd and concise definition of victory in this long drawn out war: victory constitutes, he claims, 'the circumstances under which the Soviet army (or the bulk of it at least) leaves. If the PDPA regime survives and continues a slow expansion of support, then the Soviets will have won'.

The timegap between writing and publication means that much has altered since 1976 in the military situation in Afghanistan. From early 1987, shipments of Stinger and Blowpipe missiles so long demanded by Afghan *mujahedin* for defence against Soviet airpower finally began to tilt the balance in this uneven struggle. The military impact of their delivery, not the consolidation of the PDPA regime or Soviet successes in this war, prompted Gorbachev's decision to begin the phased withdrawal of its 'limited military contingent' in May 1988.

Afghanistan: the great game revisited is a collection of essays covering eleven topics linked to the modern history of Afghanistan. It focuses on the country's status as a buffer state, its growing dependence upon the Soviet Union and the guerrilla struggle which began in 1978. The editor, Rosanne Klass, is an American who once worked in Afghanistan, and is very active in the New York lobby on behalf of the Afghan resistance. In her introduction she defines the book's aim as being to provide 'a basic understanding of the Afghanistan issue, including the historical and geopolitical contexts in which it can be better understood'.

The great game revisited is undoubtedly partisan, but is cogently argued and objective, by and large. (There is no space here to discuss the most controversial section, by Yossef Bodansky.) Contributions by some distinguished regional

specialists ensure that the book gives many insights into recent history. Well-planned appendices include two valuable 'Who's Who' sections, giving succinct biographies of the leading figures of the PDPA regime and Afghan opposition parties.

Leon Poullada covers the period 1919–80, in the last part of which Afghan relations with the superpower to the north developed out of all recognition. Soviet economic interests in Afghanistan are the subject of two chapters, with exploitation of mineral resources jointly analysed by an ex-minister of mines and industries, Abdul Tawab Assifi, and US geologist, John Schroder. They give disturbing details of the methods by which the USSR first took a monopoly in this undeveloped land's large assets of natural gas and other mineral riches, and then proceeded to exploit it ruthlessly, largely, the writers claim, for its own benefit rather than Afghanistan's.

The Norwegian anthropologist, Frederik Barth, has a valuable short chapter on 'cultural wellsprings of resistance'. It is Barth's sober judgement that the massive destruction since 1978 is irreparable in terms of society, and that the balance existing in pre-war Afghanistan cannot be recreated when peace finally returns. Barth argues that the needs of the struggle itself must inevitably deprive the Afghans of some of their most cherished values—those, ironically, that had in the first place motivated their long struggle against an alien regime.

In another chapter, Barnett Rubin summarises the grim state of human rights abuses in Afghanistan. His conclusion is that 'the extent of death, hunger, disease and depopulation as a result of the invasion place it among the great disasters of this century'. Among other chapters, there is a fascinating study by the late Professor Alexandre Bennigsen of the impact of the Afghan war in Soviet Central Asia, and a cogently written section on the ruling PDPA by Anthony Arnold and the editor.

Walking a tightrope: the global economy in the 1980s

Frances Stewart

Deficits and the Dollar: the world economy at risk

Stephen Marris

Washington DC: Institute for International Economics. 1988. 343pp.
\$18.00pb

THE STRUGGLE FOR AFGHANISTAN

External Deficits and the Dollar: the pit and the pendulum

Edited by Ralph C Bryant, Gerald Holtham and Peter Hooper

Washington DC: The Brookings Institution. 1988. 147pp. £23.95hb/£8.75pb

The Debt Threat

Tim Congdon

Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1988. 246pp. £25.00hb/£7.95pb

Managing the Dollar: from the Plaza to the Louvre

Yoichi Funabashi

Washington DC: Institute for International Economics. 1988. 297pp. n/p

The Rising Yen: the impact of Japanese financial liberalization on world capital markets

Richard S Thorn

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. 1987. 144pp. \$18.00hb/\$12.00pb

Managing Global Money

Graham Bird

London: Macmillan. 1988. 304pp. £35.00hb

The 1980s have been a 'lost' decade for much of the Third World, both in economic and social terms, with declining per capita incomes, chronic foreign exchange crises, gruelling stabilisation and adjustment efforts, a debt situation that continues to worsen despite heroic efforts to deal with it, and a heavy human toll in terms of rising malnutrition and deteriorating health. Yet the decade has been a relatively good one for the world economy, especially considering the tightrope it has been walking. After recession in the early 1980s, sustained economic growth has occurred among the advanced countries, inflation has been brought down from the high levels experienced in the late 1970s, investment has been rising and unemployment has started to fall in most countries. This apparent success is especially remarkable given the huge imbalances the decade has witnessed, and the rising debt mountain, both of which have led to prognostications of disasters to come in the near future.

These events raise some questions of fundamental importance to human welfare over the next decade: first, is disaster just round the corner on present policies? Second, how, if at all, can the disaster scenario(s) be avoided? Third, what are the implications for the Third World of alternative scenarios?

The books reviewed here are primarily concerned with the first two of these questions; they focus on recent developments in the world economic and financial system, with short-and medium-term prognostications. Their central con-

cern is with the sustainability of the system, viewed from the perspective of advanced countries. Developments in the Third World are hardly touched in four of the books, although Third World debt gets a section to itself in Congdon's analysis, and the bulk of Bird's essays are focused on developing countries.

Although they differ in precise subject matter, focus and perspective, the main analyses in these books agree in their central conclusions, which are deeply pessimistic: the present macro-economic policies being adopted by the leading advanced countries are not sustainable, and, unless there is fundamental change, will lead to a major world recession.

Marris' *Deficits and the Dollar* is a reissue, with a new introduction, of a book first published in 1985. In the earlier book, he argued that the then very large over-valuation of the dollar would—unless there were major policy changes—eventually be corrected by a massive loss in confidence in the dollar, resulting in a dramatic fall in its value, overshooting the 'correct' rate; this would lead to sharply rising interest rates in the USA, and consequently to recession; recession in the rest of the world would follow as the sharp turn round in the US trade deficit reduced demand for goods produced outside the USA. He described this scenario as the 'hard landing'. Since 1985, the dollar has been significantly devalued (by over 40 per cent), while growth has continued in the USA and other advanced countries. Yet, Marris does not believe this signifies a successful 'soft' landing. Despite the devaluation, in 1986 US exports only paid for 60 per cent of imports, leaving a huge trade deficit. As a consequence, external debt continues to increase massively each year, debt servicing thus adding to the payments burden. With the current-account deficit running at over \$150 billion, the need for a massive adjustment remains. Marris believes that further dollar devaluation, and deflation both in the USA and elsewhere, are likely, as this ultimately unavoidable adjustment occurs.

A similar - if less dramatically presented—view is held by the authors of *External Deficits and the Dollar*. This book consists of a collection of essays written for a Brookings Institution Workshop. The central exercise was the development of an econometric model of the US balance of payments, by Helkie and Hooper, which permitted estimation of the various parameters determining the recent past, current and future course of the US external account. The model suggests that the slow response of the deficit to the devaluation is largely due to lags in the response of exports and imports to the changing exchange rate, and that without the devaluation the deficit in 1986 and 1987 would have been much larger than it was. Basing their reasoning on the empirical findings of the model, Bryant and Holtham analyse prospects for the deficit and the US economy. Devaluation alone, they conclude, will be insufficient to cure the deficit, which in their view is likely to improve for a couple of years, and then worsen again, given the unfavourable set of income elasticities for US goods and the mounting debt service obligations. At the heart of the prob-

lem is the macro-imbalance in the US economy, consisting of the excess of expenditure over savings, largely due to the budget deficit and compounded by the debt servicing problem. Correction of the trade and budget imbalances will inevitably have a deflationary effect on the world economy, unless the slack is taken up by expansion elsewhere.

In *The Debt Threat* Congdon also looks at past developments, and offers a prognosis for the world economy. His main conclusion is remarkably similar to that of the other authors: 'without a major change in macro-economic variables the American economy is headed for continuing and potentially drastic upheaval'. His prime concern is the instability arising from the debt situation in its many manifestations. The basic argument is simple and convincing: so long as interest rates exceed the growth in income, the debt situation will sooner or later become unsustainable, as debt servicing eats into income. He shows that the same proposition applies to many different types of debt—to US government debt, to that of farmers and others within the USA, and to Third World borrowers. While there are caveats to the central proposition (for example, if the outstanding debt is being run down there need be no problem when interest rates exceed growth, nor if debt is a very small proportion of total wealth, nor while new lending is forthcoming in abundance) the caveats do not apply to the outstanding debt situations that Congdon describes. In the 1970s real interest rates were often negative and never more than 2.5 per cent, so that, in general, the growth in income for each category of borrower easily exceeded the interest rate. Had this continued, as lenders and borrowers expected, there need have been no problem. But from 1980, real interest rates shot up. According to Congdon's calculations, they have never dropped below 8.9 per cent since 1981, greatly exceeding the growth in income and thereby threatening the financial solvency of developed countries (including the USA), other groups of debtors and banks. According to Congdon, solutions to the debt problem must tackle two basic problems: the deficits, which cause the rising levels of debt, and high real interest rates. Thus, for the USA, a reduced budget deficit and reduced interest rates are required. For developing countries, there needs to be a change in the relationship between interest rates and commodity prices. World inflation—ironically the spectre most feared by developed country governments and the IMF—would effectively achieve this, so long as it did not spark off further rises in nominal interest rates. Failing such a change, and in the absence of agreed debt repudiation, unilateral action by developing country borrowers seems unavoidable. As Congdon puts it, 'the interesting question is . . . how soon the pessimists will be proved right'.

All the authors agree that the disaster scenario can be avoided by appropriate action in the USA and elsewhere. Marris, and Bryant et al, advocate international coordination. If the rest of the world—especially Japan and West Germany—could be persuaded to follow expansionary fiscal policies, while coordinating to achieve relatively low interest rates and stable exchange rates,

then the hard landing could be avoided. The central issue then becomes political: how can the various actors be persuaded to follow the path that these authors agree is necessary.

This is where Funabashi's *Managing the Dollar: from the Plaza to the Louvre* becomes essential reading. In a fascinating and detailed account, Funabashi describes how the governments of the Group of Five (G5) (Britain, France, Japan, the USA and West Germany), represented by finance ministers and central bankers, with occasional interventions from heads of government, initiated a limited form of economic policy-making coordination at the Plaza Hotel in 1985; the 'Plaza Pact' that set off the dollar depreciation. He records the progress and retreats in policy coordination over the following two years among the changing G5 (expanded to the G7 with the addition of Canada and Italy, in Tokyo in May 1986 when enhanced surveillance was agreed), and reduced to the G2 (just the USA and Japan in September 1986) with a renewed G5 meeting at the Louvre in February 1987, and agreeing to aim to establish exchange rates 'within ranges broadly consistent with underlying fundamentals'. The agenda for policy coordination covered the elements considered critical in the analyses described above: exchange rates, and budgetary and monetary policy.

There were some real achievements. First, there was acceptance of the need for some intervention, which was a very large change from the earlier market-oriented non-interventionist policy; and also agreement that the world is interdependent and that national policy-making should take into account its effects on other nations as well as on the domestic economy. In more substantive terms, the main achievement was with respect to exchange rates. The fact that the dollar was devalued and that, so far, overshooting through speculative activity has been avoided is largely due to interventionism following these agreements. But little has been achieved on either budgetary or fiscal policy. On the one hand, the USA has set itself against the tax increases necessary to correct its budget deficit, and the US President, George Bush, suggests that little immediate change is likely. On the other, Japan has only made some slight lip-serving moves towards expansionism, while West Germany has remained adamantly unmoved by pressures to expand. For a short while, there was some coordination to keep down interest rates, but this has completely lapsed in recent months. Thus, the major macro-imbalances show few signs of any real adjustment, and the earlier prognostications remain valid. Funabashi provides some useful insights on why this is so. There are differences in economic ideology. The rather Keynesian analysis presented in the books considered here is by no means universally accepted, especially in Japan and West Germany which have done so well following orthodox policies. Moreover, conflicts within countries prevent agreements being effectively implemented. In the case of the USA, neither Congress nor the Federal Reserve Board are controlled by the Treasury Secretary, and in the era described here, this was

made worse by the vacuum at the top. Similar restraints apply elsewhere. In West Germany, the Bundesbank is quite independent of the finance ministry. In Japan, politics and culture put a break on change, as is well illustrated in Thorn's analysis in *The Rising Yen* of the reasons for the slow progress towards financial liberalisation.

The Third World is the victim of this failure to achieve effective policy coordination. In the 1980s, Latin America and Africa have suffered particularly from the combination of low commodity prices and high interest rates. While the leading countries have begun to recognise the need to take some account of each other's interests in formulating policy, this recognition has not extended to the Third World. If the disaster scenario occurs, developing countries will suffer much more as commodity prices fall much further, while their markets for manufactured exports will be reduced by lower demand in the advanced countries and by the probable escalation in protectionism. The advanced countries have made half-hearted and generally ill-conceived attempts to help these countries through the crisis via the IMF and the World Bank, as some of the essays in *Managing Global Money* indicate. (This book suffers from already being dated—much of the data ends in 1982—and consisting of rather disjointed short pieces, which for the most part do not add greatly to our understanding of current events.) But for the Third World—as for the world economy as a whole—more fundamental changes are needed. Third World representatives ought to be included in world policy-making efforts. Yet, the reverse is happening, with critical decisions being taken by only two or three countries. At present, this means that Third World countries passively await the consequences of decisions on which their economic viability depends. This is fundamentally unsatisfactory. There is a need for Third World economic summits, in which countries can formulate alternative strategies, so that they can react intelligently and take initiatives in a world economy which is, as these books suggest, in danger of veering out of control.

BOOK REVIEWS

Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia

Christopher Clapham

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 284pp. £25.00hb

Ethiopia: transition and development in the Horn of Africa

Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate

Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/Aldershot, England: Avebury. 1988. 224pp. £15.00hb

Revolutions, Clapham remarks, attract writers who are interested in the phenomenon itself, but often have little previous knowledge of the society in which the revolution has taken place. The revolution in Ethiopia has had its share of them. Clapham's own knowledge of Ethiopia is extensive. His first contribution was a lucid account of *Haile Selassie's Government* (1969). The present work is based on research in the country, and is welcome on several counts. To begin with, it is the first comprehensive account of the successor regime as it completed a dozen years in power. Its successes and failures are assessed from a position of 'dispassionate observation', as the author puts it, meaning detachment from the struggle of groups and ideas that a revolution represents. That is not an unmitigated advantage, as we shall see, for it verges on barren empiricism, yet, it is refreshingly reliable in a topic marked by intense controversy. Highlighting, as it does, some central features of this controversy, this work moves a step further the debate concerning the nature of both the revolution in Ethiopia and its present regime.

The debate's starting point is the nature of the movement that caused the collapse of the *ancien régime*. Clapham rejects the notion of a 'revolution from above' suggested by Halliday and Molyneux (*The Ethiopian Revolution*, 1981) and favoured by admirers of the Dergue, the military committee that seized power in 1974. 'It was ultimately the revolution that made the Dergue,' he says, 'rather than the Dergue that made the revolution' (p 42). Although the soldiers found themselves at the centre of events, he notes, the framework within which they operated was set up by events outside. Moreover, none of the policies which were to turn the Ethiopian experience into a revolution originated within the Dergue.

Then who made the revolution? The answer to this question comes in two parts, because what makes a revolution is not so much the destruction of the old order as the construction of a new one. The demise of the imperial regime is attributed to a structural collapse caused by its inability to manage new social forces produced by modernisation in the urban sector while, at the same time, the regime's traditional links with the peasant sector ceased to be effective. An alienated intelligentsia thirsting for power is the key social group, and it succeeds because the peasants remain indifferent to the fate of their traditional rulers.

The case, according to the author, fits neatly into T Skocpol's concept of revolution as a collapse of the power structure in traditional monarchical states with a peasant social base; the French and Russian revolutions being the best known examples (*States and Social Revolutions*, 1979). Regarding this as a sufficient theoretical foundation, Clapham contrasts it to Marxism, which he rejects both as theory and method. Seeing

no necessary connection between economic structure and revolution, he advocates the 'primacy of the political' as the key to understanding why revolutions occur. This sounds like the call of counter-reformation in political theory, the reassertion of nineteenth-century liberalism, and an odd perspective indeed for the study of revolution in the second half of the twentieth century.

The book's main theme is the construction of a new political order. This is treated in sober and detailed fashion, and many threads are woven together to depict the most important achievement of the revolution; the forging of a powerful, highly centralised state, which is used by its rulers as an instrument for national integration and economic transformation. This having been the goal of the imperial regime as well, it represents one line of continuity. The difference lies in the choice of Marxism-Leninism as the organisational principle for state and society, a choice favoured by Third World elites for its efficacy. It entails the nationalisation of the means of production, the centralisation of power, the bureaucratisation of the state, the mobilisation and regimentation of the population, the creation of a single party, the propagation of ideology, and a shift of position in international relations. All these aspects are treated separately but also related together to nail down the central point that the end goal of each and all is the reinforcement and centralisation of the Ethiopian state. For example, Clapham interprets the ideological fervour of the regime as an appreciation of ideology as a means of control, and cannot even surmise what Marxism-Leninism can mean for Mengistu Haile Mariam, the head of the regime, other than 'as an instrument for achieving nationalist and statist goals . . .' (p 81).

In terms of its main goal, of fortifying the state through the imposition of centralised control on its subjects, the revolutionary regime in Ethiopia is accounted a success. In addition to eliminating civilian opposition from the left, and containing dissident nationalist and regional opposition, it was able to carry out massive programmes of resettlement and villagisation in the midst of famine in the mid-1980s. Even during that terrible ordeal, it was able to impose its own political priorities on its dazed subjects and the international community that came to their aid.

Undoubtedly, this is an impressive record. It leads Clapham to conclude that, by the time it was proclaimed a people's democratic republic in 1987, 'Ethiopia possessed an authentic Marxist-Leninist regime . . .' (p 91). His perception of Marxism-Leninism is a mechanistic one, what was once called 'the organisational weapon', or, as he puts it, 'an extraordinarily effective mechanism for combining tightly centralised elite control with the co-optation of the able and ambitious, and at least a token level of mass participation and democratic accountability' (p 9). This mechanism is the Workers Party of Ethiopia, founded in 1984.

An untested organisation, barely three years old at the time Clapham was writing, this is an elite party of the state apparatus, in his estimation, and has scarcely any real workers or peasants in its ranks. Yet, apparently, he is convinced that it will do all that is expected of it. That remains to be seen. In the meantime, 'the regime's basic means of control is provided by the armed forces' (p 109).

Even within the author's perspective of Marxism-Leninism as an organisational weapon, if one were to assess the regime's performance towards the revolution's twin goals of national integration and economic transformation, its effectiveness is open to question. In the economic sphere, property relations were certainly transformed, but little else has happened save a steady decline in production. Indeed, Clapham implies

that little else can be expected because, 'despite the enormous post-revolutionary increases in organisational efficiency and control capacity', the regime appears to have come up 'against the limits imposed by the fragile and undeveloped agricultural economy ...' (p 125). Its record in resolving the manifold bloody national conflict is equally unimpressive. This issue gets muted treatment in this book, mainly devoted to the role of ethnicity, which the author seems to think is, or ought to be, the heart of the matter. The only relevance Marxism-Leninism is seen to have to this issue is, once again, its effectiveness as an organisational weapon in the service of both the regime and its opponents.

Of course, Clapham's general perception of Marxism-Leninism is an outdated caricature. Fortunately, this does not detract from the value of his work, since it matters little what label one chooses to attach to the regime in Ethiopia, as long as its nature is made clear. However, when he chooses to berate those who assess the regime from a Marxist viewpoint and find it wanting, its limitations become obvious. Surprisingly, he repeats a *canard* invented by Halliday and Molyneux, according to whom the left in Ethiopia refused to accept the fact that a revolution had taken place, because it lost the struggle for power. Since the left has claimed that *it* made the revolution, this is patently absurd. Clapham accuses the left of a simple-minded harbouring of teleological visions concerning what a revolution can accomplish. In his view, little more can be expected, particularly of revolution in the Third World, than an attempt to create a Leviathan state complete with an all-powerful dictator. The rest— mass participation, equality, justice, freedom, and so on— are chimeras dwelling in the minds of ideologues. What the left in Ethiopia refused to accept is this dismal vision of revolution.

Ethiopia: transition and development in the Horn of Africa is a terse profile of the country, sketched by two Ethiopian academics settled in the USA. It covers a great many topics in summary fashion, drawing on published sources, and adding little to the record. It is a handy introduction to the subject, containing useful statistical data, especially on the economy, and is not overburdened with analysis or comment. To the extent that they do comment, the authors are likely to disagree emphatically with Clapham. For example, see their comment on the nature of the revolution and the regime: 'What started out as a popular social movement against imperial rule was first subverted into a military government that later degenerated into a one-man dictatorship.' (p 75).

JOHN MARKAKIS*
University of Crete

Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: the rise and fall of the second republic

Richard A Joseph

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 237 pp. £27.50hb

Nigeria returned to democratic politics on 1 October 1979 after thirteen years of military rule. Just over four years later, the Second Republic, which itself had taken more than

* John Markakis's *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (1987) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (3) July 1988, pp 1391-3

four years of meticulous preparations, collapsed following Nigeria's fourth successful *coup d'état*. Such was its apparent fragility that leading political figures frequently and charily spoke of it as a 'democratic experiment'. The Second Republic shared many of the key afflictions which had also provoked the bloody military overthrow of the so-called First Republic in January 1966 (for Britain conceded republican status three years after formal independence in 1960).

Joseph seeks to explain this circle of political renewal and decay. Until its final parts, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* is the most coherent and stimulating book of political analysis I have read on the Nigerian Second Republic. Joseph starts with the question: 'What is the nature of the fundamental processes of Nigerian political life?' His answer reflects a new kind of synthesis, one that is akin to the work of Gavin Williams (*State and Society in Nigeria*, 1980) of the First Republic and its military successor. Both works, which are rooted in the Weberian tradition, demonstrate the centrality in the Nigerian political economy of the fierce struggle for control of state power and its spoils.

The hallmark of Joseph's work, however, is the conceptual notion of what he has termed 'prebendalism'. By this he refers to patterns of political behaviour which reflect as their prime purposes the competition for state power, and its utilisation of the private benefit of its holders and those of their reference groups or clients. He uses it to analyse the relationship between the process of party formation and the mode of socio-political behaviour, as they concern the Second Republic. Joseph also demonstrates that military rule, which itself apparently seeks to resolve 'the contradictions between democracy and prebendalism', serves only to accentuate the towering economic significance of the state, 'and thus, in a circular fashion, to fuel the various features of prebendalism'.

While Joseph's contention that state officials prebendalise their offices for their own benefit is unassailable, the argument that they also do so to benefit 'their reference or support group' is rather troubling. This unwittingly smacks of conferring a kind of democratic legitimacy on prebendal practices. Besides, it ignores the fact that what trickle-down effect there is affects not so much the state officials' communities as particular political or business clients. There is arguably a quest by the people for democratic representation, but this has less to do with 'democracy as a crucial defense by small groups to protect their access to the public till' (Joseph citing Nelson Kasfir) than with ascription, manipulation, and the order of domination. Not infrequently, military coups have been rapturously welcomed by the people, only to lose popular support soon after. This contradictory unity, as Sam C Nolutshungu once argued, reflects a kind of antipolitics among the people: a suspicion of politicians born of their past excesses and a dislike of the impositions of military rule.

The book sheds remarkable light on Igbo politics and the Igbo's perception of themselves and their place in the Nigerian political equation. One suspects, though, that subsequent accounts by prominent political actors would show that Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe plainly agreed to be the Patron of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) but then suddenly reneged in order to lead the Nigerian People's Party. The NPN, Joseph demonstrates convincingly, was a party based on prebendal and clientelistic premises par excellence. He also makes a valuable contribution to the existing knowledge of the 'Kaduna Mafia', especially its early factional strife with other elements of the dominant northern political

class. But some would dismiss the view that the NPN stood for 'Northern primacy' in the Nigerian Federation as no more than the smear of its party political adversaries. The NPN undoubtedly had its roots in the northern political establishment and was heavily influenced by it, but it comprised the broadest coalition of class and ethno-regional interests, with its largest electoral support coming from both the northern and southern ethnic minorities.

Joseph's treatment of Yoruba politics under the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) is exceptionally perceptive. But his view that the UPN's election programme contained 'powerful appeals to class action' by the poor is rather curious. This was certainly an appeal reserved for the People's Redemption Party which organised its politics around the *talakawa* (commoner class), notably in Kaduna and Kano States. Had the five states which the UPN governed 'been a nation unto itself', writes Joseph, the party 'could have established a new model of progressive party politics for tropical Africa'. But given the autonomy which the states enjoyed *vis-à-vis* the federal centre, the massive legislative majorities and popular base which the UPN had in those states, and the disastrous records of almost all the governments, this perhaps is too great a claim.

Joseph's chief concern, however, is the ways in which prebendal practices weave peacefully with class, ethnic, linguistic, clientelistic, and regional strategies and identities to undermine constitutional democracy. He shows this by analysing the ways in which Nigerians of all social strata pursue both their individual and group objectives. The analysis is complemented by a review of theories of democracy, clientelism, consociationalism, ethnicity, and pluralism. The result is a compelling work of historical and theoretical relevance to the study of other peripheral capitalist societies.

An analysis of the record of the NPN federal government, or any other political party at the state level, is noticeably missing from the book. But this turns out not to be the result of perversity or caprice. Joseph argues that since other authors had covered many aspects of the collapse of the system, he chose to focus on the conduct of the 1983 elections which he considered to be 'the most critical and revealing' dimension of the decay. Perhaps inevitably, the journey ends in something of a morass. Having diagnosed the problem as lying so deep in history, ideology, and culture, no honest author will easily provide an instant solution. And this one concedes the possibility that no solution exists, at least in the short term.

Yet, he does not shirk the effort. He argues that the task of evolving positive and viable forms of political order in Africa 'is likely to occur less by prescription from above than by the maturing of modern economic and political processes in the towns and villages of African nations'. He goes on: 'Consensual politics, governmental efficiency, economic resiliency and public ethics must evolve via a process of dynamic interaction. Such a process requires of political actors and commentators a long view of the contemporary historical period.' All that may be far from wholly satisfactory. But Joseph has made a diagnosis that is hard to resist: of a country whose vast resources have been prebendalised, a country which is caught in a vicious circle of political renewal and decay, and one whose democratic aspirations remain hostage to the sway not of democratic consensus but of cliquism, casuistry, and command.

SHIHU OTHMAN

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Banker to the Third World: US portfolio investment in Latin America, 1900-1986

Barbara Stallings

Berkeley, California/London: University of California Press. 1987. 434pp. \$45.00hb/\$12.95pb

The Dance of the Millions: Latin America and the debt crisis

Jackie Roddick

London: Latin America Bureau. 1988. 256pp. \$18.95hb/\$5.95pb

Although debt fatigue may have set in among bankers and Latin American governments involved in the debt crisis, it has not yet affected authors. Fortunately, these two books are a welcome and highly readable addition to the ever-widening stock of studies on the debt crisis, its origins and possible solutions. Furthermore, the two books complement each other rather well. Barbara Stallings' work, despite its title, brings the story up to the early 1980s, or to the eve of the debt crisis itself, while Jackie Roddick's study is primarily concerned with the impact of the debt crisis on Latin America and the responses of creditors and debtors since 1982.

Banker to the Third World begins by looking at the British experience with capital exports before the First World War to see what lessons, if any, can be learnt for studying US portfolio investment in the twentieth century in Latin America. From this experience she derives a set of hypotheses to guide her research. Not all of these hypotheses survive the test, but they do provide a useful framework for organising the study.

US portfolio investment in Latin America built up rapidly in the 1920s following the emergence of the USA as a capital surplus country. This growth in lending to Latin America was helped by institutional changes in the USA and the decline in the relative importance of European portfolio investment following the First World War. The explosion of lending in the 1920s, followed by the defaults of the 1930s, has obvious parallels with the rapid growth of bank lending in the 1970s followed by the crisis of the 1980s. Stallings is not persuaded, however, that the present crisis will end in a round of defaults similar to the 1930s, and gives persuasive reasons for this claim based on changes in the international environment and the fact that the bulk of debt is now held in the form of loans by bankers rather than as in the 1930s—in the form of bonds by individuals.

One of the great strengths of Barbara Stallings' book is the wealth of empirical data she has assembled to support her case. Much of this evidence is presented in the appendices, giving the readers the chance to check for themselves the validity of her claims. This data base, which in the case of some series goes back to 1899, is mined both qualitatively and quantitatively to answer three essential questions: what is going to happen? What kind of solutions to the debt crisis should be instituted? How can such problems be avoided in the future? To the extent that history sheds light on these questions, Barbara Stallings provides persuasive answers. Yet, since the present crisis differs in several ways from previous financial crises in Latin America, history cannot provide all the solutions. Without doubt, however, this is an important book which deserves to be read widely. It provides an extremely sober and accurate

account of the present crisis which gives due weight to the role of both creditors and debtors.

The Dance of the Millions is much harsher on the creditors than the debtors, with the former taking much of the blame for the irresponsible rise in bank lending in the 1970s as well as the failure to find solutions in the 1980s. It is not, nor probably is it intended to be, a balanced, 'objective' study. Yet, although it is written from a partisan point of view, it is by no means unfair in many of its judgements. It displays a good grasp both of international finance and of the many links between responses to the debt crisis and social, political and economic problems in Latin America.

General chapters on the origins of the debt crisis and creditors' responses are complemented by case studies of Brazil, Peru and Costa Rica. There is a final chapter, entitled 'sentenced to debt', which gives a suitably caustic account of the limited response so far forthcoming from the governments of creditor countries. Although Jackie Roddick is primarily concerned to supply a wide-ranging view of the debt crisis in its many facets, there is a wealth of detail on such things as debt-equity swaps and securitisation (converting loans into bonds at prices which reflect discounts in the secondary markets). Hard-nosed bankers will not be persuaded to change their views by reading this book, but it will serve as a useful and up-to-date introduction to the debt crisis for non-specialists.

VICTOR BULMER-THOMAS

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'The Poor and the Powerless: economic policy and change in the Caribbean

Clive Y Thomas

London: Latin America Bureau. 1988. £29.95hb/£8.95pb

The economic crisis in the Commonwealth Caribbean, manifest in its present form since the mid 1970s, continues unabated. In this comprehensive and informative study, Clive Thomas provides not only facts and figures illustrative of the depth and intractability of the crisis, but also offers a new and radical perspective as to 'why' and 'how' it came about. Of crucial importance here is his methodology, which is rooted in political economy, and sensitive to history and the interplay of external and internal factors. The end result is a book larger in scope and vision than any conventional economic analysis of the region; and with a conclusion that advocates sweeping social and political change as a necessary concomitant to economic development.

The work is organised in three parts. In the first, Thomas reviews the roots of the crisis from Columbus to the Second World War. Dominating political economy during this period are the colonial slave economy and the long transition to dependent underdevelopment at the periphery of the world economy. The legacies left by this period are many and varied, manifest today in the region's political institutions, social structure and economic life. They are ignored in economic analysis, Thomas argues, only at the risk of seriously distorting reality.

In the second part he examines the record of the nationalist governments in promoting development in the region since the Second World War. A number of strategies and sectors are investigated: industrialisation following the Puerto Rican example; in-

tensified enclave exploitation of oil and bauxite resources; neglect of agriculture; and the advancement of new poles of growth in tourism and off-shore banking. A vital aspect in all this has been the growth of the economically active state. In turn, Thomas demonstrates, this has led directly to the development and consolidation of a 'new' bourgeoisie. However, this bourgeoisie is in no sense independent and so has been unable to effect the limited economic transformation of the region it earnestly desired. Rather, all that has happened is that dependence has been deepened and capitalism modernised in line with changes in the metropolitan economies.

The reward of national independence, following Thomas, has therefore been continuing underdevelopment. The form it currently takes is analysed at length in the final part of the book. The picture painted is depressing in the extreme. The radical experiments of Michael Manley in Jamaica, Maurice Bishop in Grenada and Forbes Burnham in Guyana are dissected and shown to be failures. The conservative successes of Tom Adams in Barbados and Eric Williams in Trinidad-Tobago are shown to be superficial and unsustainable. The programme of regional integration, on which so much hope was placed, is shown to be incapable of momentum. And present policies favouring closer integration into the international system, now so enthusiastically embraced by the regional bourgeoisie and its metropolitan partners, are shown to be without foundation if the goal is development. In short, Thomas concludes, the Commonwealth Caribbean cannot progress. The majority of its people-- the poor and the powerless--are condemned to greater poverty and greater marginality unless radical policies are put in place to arrest the whole process and put it on a new trajectory.

What these policies might be are fleetingly the subject of the final chapter. They are unorthodox but not iconoclastic. They might even work, although it must be said that the chances of any of them being adopted in the present geopolitical climate pervading the Commonwealth Caribbean are slim. Nevertheless, Thomas has authored a work of real interest to a wide range of people. He has exposed weaknesses and provided much ammunition to those advocating alternative policies. He is unlikely to persuade the powerful, although he may influence the political activist at grassroots level. Above all, he will appeal to the student, and to the youth of the region. The price and the relatively open style of the book make it readily accessible to a good number of them; and they, in turn, are the most likely to react positively to its insistent message of fundamental change.

PAUL SUTTON

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Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era: regime and elites, conflict and collaboration.

Mordechai Abir

London: Croom Helm, 1988. 247pp. £25.00hb

Yamani: the inside story

Jeffrey Robinson

London: Simon & Schuster, 1988. 302pp. £14.95hb

These two seemingly different books have essentially similar themes. Even though Mordechai Abir has not had the benefit of visiting Saudi Arabia or meeting any of its principal political actors, his meticulous historical and political analysis highlights some of the fundamental problems and crises that Saudi Arabia faces today. Jeffrey Robinson has the advantage not only of knowing Sheikh Yamani but also of having interviewed a number of Arab, American and British political leaders, academics and journalists. His analysis is often anecdotal, but some of the facts and conclusions that flow from it have an authentic ring.

There are two main themes running through these books: (1) certain central conflicts between political and bureaucratic leaders belonging to the Sudairis and non-Sudairis within the royal family, and those conflicts between political and bureaucratic leaders belonging to larger ethnic and regional groups such as the Hijazis and the Nejdis; (2) the larger international conflicts between the Arabs and the Israelis and how these impinge on the foreign and domestic policies of Saudi Arabia. These conflicts are also related to the superpower rivalry and struggle for the oil resources of Saudi Arabia. The theme that has not been explored relates to the Saudi attempt to develop an autonomous role as a regional power in the Middle East.

The narrative of *Yamani: the inside story* centres around two principal actors, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani and King Fahd. The conflict of interests and perceptions that emerged between Yamani, the Minister of Petroleum, and King Fahd is described in breathtaking detail, while the causes that led to the dismissal of Yamani in 1986 are also analysed. *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era* includes such details about this conflict. Where both books seem to break new ground is in suggesting and emphasising that such conflicts are anchored in the deeper political and ethnic divisions existing between the Hijazis and the Nejdis in Saudi Arabia. Yamani and a number of technocrats, industrialists and merchants, with their connections with US and European centres of trade and commerce, have viewed the world with more cosmopolitan perceptions than the Nejdis. The latter are closer to the Saudi royal family, who are also Nejdis, and because of this connection the Nejdis tend to be politically more powerful than the Hijazis. Jeffrey Robinson, deriving his information from a Western intelligence source, corroborated by a member of the Saudi royal family, tells us that there is a masonic-like organisation known as the Fataa Nejd led by the Minister of Finance, Aba al-Khail.

It was clear that by 1985-86 Yamani had fallen foul of Fahd's unrealistic directive not to let the price of oil sink, at a time when the market was facing a glut owing both to the lack of cooperation among the OPEC countries, and to the Saudi government's policy of acquiring weapons and planes through barter deals in which oil figured prominently. An additional factor for the removal of Yamani was that he resisted the dominant designs of the Nejd bureaucratic elite which wielded power through financial controllers placed in all the ministries and appointed by the Minister of Finance. Yamani's Ministry of Petroleum and the Aramco were defying this Nejd power elite. Yamani's successor, the present Minister of Petroleum and Planning, Hisham Nazer, although a Hijazi, 'was known to be acceptable to the Fataa Nejd'.

The two books end with speculations and some semi-respectable prognostications about the future. Abir's book, which is strong in areas of domestic policy, speculates that the dominance of the Sudairi faction (Fahd with his six brothers from the same mother, five of whom hold key positions in the government) may be challenged by the

younger Saudi princes who have emerged as military officers and technocrats. Such a challenge is likely to occur in the wake of a serious and continuous economic crisis. One can see how tenuous all such speculation is because the same author thinks that in spite of such a challenge to the Sudairi hegemony, the capable Prince Salman, present Governor of Riyadh and another Sudairi, may emerge as a compromise dominant figure to please the younger Saudis and the middle-class elites.

Robinson's speculations about the possible emergence of the Soviet Union as a dominant superpower in the Middle East deserve some comment. Quoting Yamani and agreeing with him, he takes the view that Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* are basically a strategy to create a solid economic infrastructure by diverting Soviet resources and talents from the arms race to more productive economic channels. All this, accompanied by the growing Soviet appetite for oil dictated by domestic needs as well as the needs of the satellites, will ultimately mean that the Soviets 'will have no choice but to try to put an oil field under their umbrella' (p 287).

All such speculations give no credit to Saudi Arabia's own capabilities which often exhibit themselves through subtle, shrewd and adroit diplomacy. This is very unlike the delusions of grandeur and overreach that the Shah of Iran demonstrated in his attempts to become a regional power of the Middle East. Saudis are aware that the situation is changing rapidly. Iran and Iraq have exhausted themselves through a long war. The Soviet Union is no longer so confident of dominating the Middle East because of its recent failure in Afghanistan. The USA, because of the influence of the Israeli lobby in Congress, cannot be relied upon as a trustworthy protector. All this creates opportunities for the Saudis to emerge as a highly influential regional power. As such, they aspire to cultivating controllable cordiality with China and the Soviet Union for arms and other purposes, continuing to strengthen their Islamic contacts through their economic and spiritual influence, and also dominating the strategically vital Gulf through their military and economic superiority. Such a strategy would not preclude continuing good relations with Western countries such as the USA, Japan and West Germany.

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Womanpower: the Arab debate on women at work

Nadia Hijab

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 176pp. £25.00hb/£8.95pb

Nadia Hijab's *Womanpower* is a welcome addition to the all too small collection of works on Arab women by Arab women. The title *Womanpower* is intended to denote both the political and economic aspects of women's lives. The work includes discussions of the legal frameworks and the cultural practices that have helped or hindered the progress of Arab women, and the parts they have played in the process of development in the region. The author attributes the failure of Arab governments to provide real economic opportunities for women to the state's inability to prioritise their many and conflicting goals at national levels. Hijab argues that, as a result, the Arab world has

not achieved its many simultaneous aims of development, internal and external political success and a clear economic identity.

The book is written in a lucid style with a touch of wry humour about some of the problems faced by women seeking to move beyond the strict limits imposed by the mores of formalised Islamic culture. There are illuminating case studies from countries across the Arab world, reported with care, sympathy and without judgmental annotations. There is a delightful story about an itinerant Jordanian antique dealer, Umm Qassem, who combines her job with the arduous one of caring for her ten children and the extended family. Or the Egyptian market women in Iraq who are dealing with male customers and selling at inflated prices. They are breaking down the traditional cultural barriers, by virtue of living in a different society to the one in which they were born. At the same time, they can rely on the leniency of the male Iraqi officials who are reluctant to arrest and imprison women.

Hijab, a journalist, has a nice eye for details and succinct points. But as an academic, I occasionally felt less than satisfied with some of the arguments, which seem a little too easy. For example, I cannot altogether agree with the proposition that women choose to don the Islamic clothing, *hejab*, merely because it is an 'off limits' sign, a useful mechanism for women in 'societies in transition' who don't know how else to deal with men (p 52). Such explanation fails to explain why some women, such as the Turks or the Libyans, would be less eager to opt for such solutions than their Egyptian or Lebanese sisters.

The book contains one of the shortcomings that occur when middle-class, professional women write about their own countries and cultures; frequently they forget about the majority of their sisters who do not figure on official statistics and are not part of the small elite public arena. Although Hijab notes the usual failure to count peasant women as agricultural workers, there is the anomalous question of the service sector. This is the largest single sector employing the majority of women in the Gulf (p 130) and a quarter of working women in Jordan (p 97) and elsewhere. Yet none of these appear to be domestic workers. Child care is described as the domain of imported Southeast Asian nursemaids who are subject to considerable racism. For example, officialdom criticises them for hindering the intellectual development of their charges (p 113), a view that is reported rather uncritically by the author. This is in part because the emphasis of the book is on the role as well as the view of the governments. The argument is that governments must initiate programmes that recognise and meet the needs and abilities of women before they can be integrated into the wage labour force (pp 92-3).

It would have been useful to have considered some of the studies that argue that it is not necessarily official plans, but rather the availability of women as the cheapest source of labour that is, in the long run, one of the most important factors in integrating them into the labour market.¹ Women are now working in export orientated industries, taking

¹ See for example F Frobel *et al*, *The New International Division of Labour*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; D Elson and R Pearson, 'The subordination of women and the internationalisation of factory production' in K Young, *et al* (eds), *Of Marriage and the Market*, CSE, 1981; S Miller, *Common Fate Common Bond*, London: Pluto Press, 1986; H I Safa, 'Runaway shops and female employment' in E Leacock and H I Safa (eds), London: Bergin and Garvey, 1986.

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over male jobs, such as tailoring in Morocco² and many are employed as home workers, or in refugee camps, or are often employed by larger firms putting out work at miserable rates.³

Despite these minor criticisms, *Womanpower* is a book which is both informative and easy to read and provides a clear and coherent overview of the situation of women in the region. A book well worth buying for both academics and non-academics.

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Nuclear Non-Proliferation: an agenda for the 1990s

Edited by John Simpson

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 237pp. £27.50hb

Nuclear Restraint in Latin America: Argentina and Brazil

John R Redick

Southampton, England: Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Southampton, 1988. 18pp. n/p

South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation

J D L Moore

London: Macmillan, 1987. 227pp. £29.50hb

Nuclear proliferation is not a fashionable subject. Western experts devote far greater efforts, and considerably more sophisticated political understanding, to studying the development of new nuclear weapons systems by existing nuclear weapons states, particularly the superpowers, than to the possibility and likely consequences of new countries acquiring nuclear weapons. This is not altogether surprising or unjustified. Yet it is increasingly complacent, and in the longer term myopic, to see Western security and world peace exclusively in terms of East West relations. Developments elsewhere increasingly impinge. Above all, the possibility of further countries acquiring nuclear weapons raises fundamental problems, themselves compounded by the increasing availability of ballistic missiles.

The efforts of Southampton University's North/South Security Relations Project, part funded by the Ford Foundation, to increase public awareness of non-proliferation problems is therefore both welcome and timely. *Nuclear Non-Proliferation: an agenda for the 1990s*, edited by John Simpson and with individual chapters by leading British, Indian, Egyptian, US and West German specialists, is the project's first major publication. It is also the first attempt to look at the issues in the context of 1995, the year in which parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will decide whether to prolong its existence, and if so for how long. Aimed primarily at a relatively specialised audience, it also provides a useful introduction to the field.

² See, for example, S Joekes, 'Working for lipstick', in H Afshar, *Women and Work in the Third World*, London: Tavistock, 1985.

³ See, for example, M al-Masri, 'Women in the labour market in the West Bank after 1967' and A Moors, 'Relocation, gender and clothing production in Nablus', papers presented at the conference on the International Division of Labour and the Middle East, Amsterdam, 1988.

There is a large degree of consensus between contributors. Despite major divergencies over whether the NPT's main aim was global nuclear disarmament or more simply preventing new states from acquiring nuclear weapons, the 1985 NPT Review Conference was relatively successful, and showed that an increasing number of states see the treaty as serving their own security interests. Some previously key factors are now of lesser importance. In particular, the slowdown in nuclear trade has defused controversy over the respective rights and obligations of suppliers and recipients in nuclear trade. Similarly, physical controls over nuclear exports play a less central role since the majority of 'suspect' countries now have the necessary materials, equipment and expertise to produce nuclear weapons should they so desire. The remaining barriers for these countries are political, not technical.

Conversely, many contributors stress the increasing importance of regional factors and perspectives. In a thoughtful analysis of Third World security problems, Aswani Ray suggests that there may be a tendency for Third World elites under the influence of their Western counterparts, to see national security purely in narrow military terms, with increasingly sophisticated weapons systems as the solution. Ian Smart suggests that there will be an increasing need to fit local or regional arrangements for handling specific proliferation concerns into consistent universal standards. Put differently, the NPT cannot by itself solve regional problems. Solutions must be found elsewhere, but must in turn reinforce rather than undermine the non-proliferation regime. Hence, perhaps there will be a greater future role for regional nuclear Weapon Free Zones.

Regional preoccupations apart, the study's main conclusions are that, although there is some scope for innovation, the main need is to strengthen existing structures. Philip Gummett interestingly but inevitably inconclusively considers how best to influence the internal debate in possibly proliferating countries. Harold Muller convincingly demonstrates the political dangers, and probable impossibility, of attempting to amend the NPT, whose continuing existence after 1995 he and other contributors see as essential. The main note is one of cautious optimism. But we are warned that the maintenance of global consensus on proliferation is closely related to the willingness of the nuclear weapon states to negotiate their own nuclear disarmament in the 1990s, and that supporters of the regime will need to work hard and imaginatively to ensure its survival into the twenty-first century. Altogether, there is much food for thought both for policy-makers and students of international relations. The study's only serious weaknesses reflect the fact that it went to press two-and-a-half years ago and therefore makes no mention of relevant subsequent developments. The most important of these are the breakthrough in US-Soviet nuclear arms control negotiations, and seriously increased nuclear tensions between India and Pakistan. Both, or either, could have a major impact on the non-proliferation regime's future.

From the same Southampton stable, John Redick's pamphlet *Nuclear Restraint in Latin America: Argentina and Brazil* is a useful summary of recent developments in a region very little studied from the non-proliferation perspective in the UK. Redick identifies Argentine-Brazilian rivalries as the main source of nuclear tension in the region, and sees in improved bilateral relations between the two countries the main hope for progress. This state of affairs, the author argues, predates Sarney and Alfonsín and is likely to outlast them. Cooperation in the nuclear sphere has been particularly important in building confidence. In an eighteen-page study, space is obviously limited.

Even so, the lack of any discussion of the role of the military as historically the main advocate of keeping nuclear options open is surprising. Some analysis of the Brazilian nuclear submarine programme, and of current West German nuclear policy in the area (which, *inter alia*, is doing much to encourage Argentina to a wider acceptance of international safeguards), would also have been useful.

South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation by J D L Moore is a credible attempt by a young academic to examine South Africa's nuclear capabilities and intentions. Unlike a number of other studies in a crowded field it avoids the simple-minded assumption that because South Africa has an unpleasant regime and because nuclear weapons are unpleasant, therefore South Africa has (or probably has) nuclear weapons. The author scrupulously maintains an open mind in weighing the evidence and motives for and against possession. With advanced technical capacity and considerable quantities of unsafeguarded enriched nuclear material, South Africa almost certainly has the means to proliferate. But, as Moore stresses, there is no convincing external target for South African nuclear weapons, and the risks of provoking external military intervention in the event of the threat of their use against neighbouring countries could well be high. There are, of course, many grounds for suspicion, but speculation is not in itself an adequate basis for policy.

The study usefully charts the history of South Africa's involvement in nuclear trade, and previous attempts to persuade major Western countries to closer links. Unfortunately, it was published before South Africa's most recent round of discussions, in August-September 1988, with the three NPT depository powers (the Soviet Union, the UK and the USA) and subsequently with other countries, on the possibility of accession to the NPT. The main thrust of South African demands was then for a guarantee of non-discriminatory trade treatment under Article III of the NPT. That such discussions took place at all is remarkable. New countries join the NPT by a simple act of accession, with no possibility of 'pre-negotiation' of the applicability of its provisions. Western countries and the Soviet Union have cooperated closely and been very cautious in their response, conscious of the tension between the demands of non-proliferation policy (which favour moving sufficiently on trade to get South Africa on board the NPT and therefore ensuring that her nuclear programme is put under international surveillance) and broader pressure to maintain and strengthen sanctions. The outcome is still uncertain. The issue remains highly topical, and the author might profitably turn his hand to a new edition in the near future.

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Sustainable Development: exploring the contradictions

Edited by Michael Redclift

London: Methuen, 1987. 221pp. £7.95pb

Land Degradation and Society

Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield

London: Methuen, 1986. 296pp. £10.95pb

Towards Sustainable Development

Panos Institute

London: Panos, 1987. 248pp. £12.95hb/£9.95pb

Michael Redclift's *Sustainable Development* is an examination of the transformation of the environment in the course of development, from the perspective of political economy. The central premise is that this transformation cannot be understood purely in terms of natural processes. Rather, we must look to the political and economic structures and processes associated with the historical development of the global economic system if we are to begin to grasp on the one hand desertification, deforestation and the destruction of nature in many developing countries, and on the other the technological innovations in developed countries which 'produce' nature, through, for example, biotechnology and genetic engineering.

The author sets out the purpose of the book as being 'to analyse . . . history and its underlying momentum, in order to discover why development has taken the course that it has and what we can do about it' (p 2). Redclift defines 'development' in terms of the historical processes of exploitation, capital and accumulation and economic growth which link the industrialised world with the 'South'. He believes that development as linear economic growth is inherently unsustainable, 'since it is impossible for accumulation to take place within the global economic system we have inherited without unacceptable environmental costs' (pp 3-4). Sustainable alternatives need to be found which do not undermine the planet's life support systems.

Redclift discusses the concept of 'sustainable development' and asks, can it provide an alternative paradigm? He is sceptical and argues that there are problems with both theory and practice. Sustainable development is a concept based largely upon ecological principles. As such it is unable to deal with what are essentially social and economic problems. At the same time competing schools of economic thought have been unable or unwilling to incorporate environmental values into an economic paradigm.

While some neo-classical economists would disagree with this last point and argue, for example, that such tools as cost-benefit analysis allow economists to measure and quantify human concern for the environment, Redclift remains unconvinced. He believes that the neoclassical position can be challenged from within economics as well as from without. Of more concern to Redclift, however, is the neglect of the environment by social scientists and the apparent failure of Marxism to grasp the 'central contradiction of advanced capitalism and its relations with the developing world . . . that the labour process, the means by which the social mediation of nature is achieved, succeeds in transforming the environment in ways that ultimately make it less productive' (p 51).

At the practical level Redclift believes that trying to implement a new 'style' of development which takes account of sustainability would require concerted international action. However, poverty and indebtedness would hinder concerted action and make it difficult to establish a new system, even if the political will existed. Furthermore, the techniques of environmental planning and management which exist in developing countries are often imported from the developed world. The methods employed are not grounded in an objective scientific approach, but have been designed to respond to the externalities thrown up by industrial society and will be of little relevance in different circumstances. In the developed world environmental demands represent

expressions of aesthetic and preservationist values, around which the planning system has emerged. In developing countries the main concern of poor people is survival and the desire to extend control over the environment to increase material rewards. The poor understandably place immediate needs and the avoidance of risks above sustainability, and their perspective is therefore at variance with that of the environmentalists and planners. At the same time, local knowledge tends to be undervalued, even though it is often based upon the experiences of people closest to the problem.

That the labour process and commoditisation render the environment less productive may well pose problems for continuing capitalist development and accumulation. Furthermore the legal and political 'superstructure' which legitimises the system and helps it to function is powerless to prevent degradation: environmental planning and management is reactive, and effective only in so far as the interests of accumulation are not compromised.

Redclift argues that capital is trying to resolve these contradictions in its own interests by extending the 'frontiers of sustainability'. State-supported technological change in Western agriculture has continued apace for many years, resulting in an increased role for capital and a reduced one for labour. At the same time decision-making has shifted from the farm-based entrepreneur to industrial and financial boardrooms, and the state has supported these processes. Recent developments in biotechnology and genetic engineering represent an extension of this 'appropriation of nature' by capital, and another twist in the cycle which divests us of the social control of nature, its destruction and its recreation.

Because the focus of the study is upon the historical development of capitalism and its role in environmental transformation, the author has nothing to say about the destruction, or production, of nature in socialist societies. Yet the environmental problems of the Soviet Union and China are well documented. Indeed it is a well-known 'green' position to argue that the problem is one of *industrialisation per se* rather than capitalist, or socialist, development, and at times this appears to be the author's own position. Perhaps the book would have benefited from a discussion of socialist environmental experiences, if only to explore the possibilities for social control of the environment in socialist development. After all, one of the author's stated aims was to analyse the course of development and discover 'what we can do about it'.

The main difficulty I have with Redclift's book is a feeling that at times the theoretical approach drifts towards a populist view of the world - hence the apparent anti-industrialism. For instance in the account of capitalist penetration into Mexico and the destruction of 'natural economy', pre-Columbian society is characterised essentially as equitable and sustainable, and Redclift's main concern appears to be the costs, rather than any progressive elements, of capitalist development: 'Should we dignify with the term "development" a process which leads millions of people to sacrifice their health and energies to survival?' (p 110).

Land Degradation and Society is a wider-ranging and more ambitious study of environmental degradation and development processes. The volume arises out of a workshop held in the Australian National University in February 1984, and attempts to answer two questions: Why does land management so often fail to prevent environmental degradation? And, how serious is the problem and for whom? The authors' main objective is to demonstrate that land degradation has social causes, and that these must be understood if there are to be social solutions.

The authors' approach, termed 'regional political ecology', places land managers (farmers, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, etc) and their 'interactive relationships' with the land at the centre of enquiry, and attempts to understand these relationships in the wider historical, political and economic context. Three main characteristics of these relationships are identified: the interactive effects of degradation and society through time; the considerations of geographical scale and the scale of social and economic organisation; and the contradictions between social change, development and the environment through time (the focus of Redclift's book).

The theoretical and methodological approach is developed in the first part of the book, partly *a priori* to the empirical chapters which follow. There are case-studies from Indonesia, the Pacific, South Asia, the Soviet Union, China, Western Europe, the USA, and Australia. These explore historical experiences such as land degradation in pre-capitalist societies, and colonialism and development; and contemporary issues such as environmental problems in tropical rain forest areas, common property resources and degradation, socialism and the environment, and agriculture and the environment in advanced capitalist countries. Throughout the empirical chapters, an attempt is made to explore experience through theory, and to test and inform theory with empirical evidence.

There are several similarities in approach between the authors and Redclift. They agree, for instance, that environmental degradation is inherently a political and economic problem. They agree that neither classical nor Marxian economics has adequately come to terms with environmental issues, thus depriving social scientists of a developed theoretical base. Their views on agricultural change in advanced capitalism coincide, and both recognise that the increasing concentration of ownership of agribusiness, with fewer large firms controlling more and more of the industry, is steadily divesting land managers of control over land-use decisions, even though the powerful ideology of the independent yeoman producer still persists.

There are, however, some important differences. Blaikie and Brookfield are wary of the populist ground which Redclift strays into from time to time, and argue, for example, that while it is tempting to call for a small farmer-oriented set of policies and encourage a bottom-up, locally specific and participatory approach, this will rarely be sufficient without state intervention to supply capital, inputs, equipment and so forth. The difference in approach is most evident in what both books have to say about pre-capitalist Mexico. Both refer to environmental management there before the arrival of the Spaniards, but their perceptions are quite different. Redclift sees in the Aztecs a society characterised by 'mechanical solidarity' and human ingenuity based upon sustainable agricultural practices (pp 107-113). Blaikie and Brookfield, on the other hand, argue that a class structure evolved in Mexico under the Aztecs, that this was reflected in the management of land and the exaction of tribute, and that, far from being sustainable, 'degradation and erosion were substantial' (p 18).

Blaikie and Brookfield also explore environmental realities under socialism, with case studies of the Soviet Union and China. The authors argue that while there are theoretical grounds for believing that socialist land management may avoid the contradictions inherent in capitalist land management, the evidence is very disturbing. For instance while the 1917 Revolution swept away archaic tenurial systems and management practices which were responsible for degradation, many harmful practices were substituted through, for example, political pressure to attain ambitious production quota.

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A key lesson which can be learned from both these books is that while a political economy approach can help us to understand what is happening and why, it appears to be less useful in informing new practices; the question 'what is to be done?' is rarely answered satisfactorily. It is a concern over this state of affairs which seems to have motivated Blaikie and Brookfield to develop their regional political ecology approach, an approach which deserves close attention by all those interested in development and the environment—particularly by the growing body of planners and environmentalists working in the 'development' industry.

Towards Sustainable Development is very different in its approach from either of the above titles. It consists of fourteen case-studies by African and Asian journalists, illustrating the relationships between environmental degradation and poverty. There are also three overview chapters by Ingvar Carlsson, Gro Harlem Brundtland and Shridath Ramphal, which explore the relationships between poverty, wealth, inequality, and environmental degradation. The understanding of the relationships echoes the report of the Brundtland Commission (reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (1) 1988).

The case-studies were prepared for the Nordic Conference on Environment and Development, held in Stockholm in May 1987, and include studies of soil erosion, desertification, domestic water supply, afforestation, rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, and industrialisation. The Swedish International Development Authority funded the publication. The fourteen case-studies are in fact evaluations by foreign journalists of development projects, funded by Scandinavian development agencies. The agencies selected the projects and the intention was to allow free comment and uncensored evaluation.

Because of the background to the volume the style is not academic, nor does it contain the jargon of development 'experts'. The case-studies tend to be more descriptive than analytical. They focus upon how local knowledge can be brought into decision-making processes and help to provide solutions to locally experienced problems. The book does not eulogise such notions as smallness, local and rural, and discusses many of the failures which have been experienced as well as the successes. However, this is done in a constructive way and the intention seems to be to share experiences and provide practical lessons which may well be transferable.

Each case-study is well illustrated with maps, charts, tables, photographs, line diagrams and sketches, as well as 'basic data' boxes giving some background to the projects. The text relies to a large extent upon anecdotal evidence from government officials, aid workers, and the views and experiences of the people directly affected by the projects. Yet it does not read as mere journalese, but rather as the results of 'action research', and in particular is good at demonstrating the conflicts of interest which can attend development efforts.

The approach adopted by the authors lends itself well to descriptive and illustrative material, and it is likely that the book will be used widely by schools as well as environmental pressure groups. Beyond that I feel it has certain limitations. There is no serious attempt to explore or develop theories of the relationships between development and the environment, nor to come to any understanding of what 'sustainable development' means. It is merely stated in the introductory section that sustainable development refers to 'paths of progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. Before such paths can be trodden we are informed that harmony and

consensus need to be reborn, between First World and Third, and between economics and ecology. Such sentiments imply a theory of development which rejects the notion of conflict and change, and they smack more than a little of the enlightened self-interest which characterised the Brandt Report.

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Tribal Guerrillas: the Santals of West Bengal and the Naxalite movement

Edward Duyker

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 201pp. £11.95hb

This is both a good and an important book for three reasons: it explains the tribal dimension of Naxalism better than any other study; it exemplifies the value of synthesising anthropology and history; and, more generally, it is a scholarly contribution to a literature on tribal rebellion and insurgency far wider than India, which embraces Greece, Vietnam and Algeria as well as sub-Saharan Africa where tribal responses to imperialism and modernisation have been significant.

As many, probably more, books have been written about the Naxalites as about the mainstream of Indian communism. Publishers assume that the potential readership—sympathetic or antipathetic—for studies of the left is more interested in bloody revolution than in bland reformism; but the real reason may be that as the movement was hijacked by urban Bengali youth in 1970, its analysis has fallen victim to the '1968' syndrome: Calcutta was the subcontinent's Paris. Duyker has done an excellent job in restoring the tribals to centre stage.

He can do this mainly because he integrates anthropology and history. Anthropologists are often criticised for being insufficiently aware of change, and historians flounder without documents. Following splendid precedents, from Leakey (Mau Mau) to Gellner, Duyker shows how in the words of the famous Cambridge historian, Geoffrey Elton, anthropology opens the historian's eyes to the significance of social habits.

This refreshingly short study is in three parts (curiously with a conclusion following the epilogue): what we know about the Santals, the best studied of tribal groupings with 57 books and 226 articles in a 1976 catalogue; their role in the uprisings of Naxalbari (1967), Midnapore (1969–70) and Birbhum (1970–71); and the interaction of Santal culture and history with Maoism and Naxalism. Throughout, Duyker draws on his own fieldwork as well as that of others.

The Santals, who had settled in the jungle tracts of Bengal and Bihar, and practised slash and burn cultivation, were even more exposed to the negative effects of British policy in early nineteenth-century Bengal than the ordinary cultivator. Forced into commercialisation and seduced by commodity fetishism, they fell deeply into debt, leading to the 'primitive rebellion' of 1855, the Santal Insurrection. Independence with the new politics and the Green Revolution further undercut their position and turned them inward on ancient solace. Customary assumptions that, though the world was unequal, the rural elite had some reciprocal obligations to the poor were progressively eroded. Landlords preferred to employ hired labour not sharecroppers and Santal wages

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were squeezed. The tribals lacked the influence and power to secure the capital inputs which would have enabled them to benefit from the new agricultural technology. The constitutional road to redress of grievances was self-evidently shut to the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

Local communist workers in districts of West Bengal where tribals were numerous were the one line of hope. Some were themselves Santals; some not. When the first United Front Ministry came to office in 1967, Hare Krishna Konar's announcement that evictions would be stayed and land redistributed to the landless raised expectations too high. Kanyu Santal, a leading member of the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party of India (CPI Marxist), began to organise land grabs and the seizure of hoarded rice and paddy. The government, committed to non-intervention in disputes between property and people, and divided many ways, tergiversated; and by mid-1967 there was a parallel administration in the area. On 5 July 1967 the Beijing *People's Daily* was speaking of 'a peal of Spring thunder' crashing over India. Ultimately bows and arrows, memories of heroic figures, hunting skills, and a millenarian vision were no match for the organised modern state any more than the naivety of college students was to be; but even after the suppression of the Birbhum uprising in 1971, the tribal issue remains. The Santals' vision of a better world had been polished and a collective solidarity revived. Now the separatist forces have become visible. The Jharkandi (the name of the proposed tribal state) Mukti Morcha, led by the charismatic Santal Messiah, Shibu Soren, is a growing force. The solution might be something along the lines of the Tripura style Autonomous Tribal District but history is not governed by logic, and the cry of the oppressed does not necessarily take class-based forms.

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Indian Security Policy

Raju G C Thomas

Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1986. 312pp. £21.00hb

With this book Raju Thomas appears to have succeeded for a second time in writing a definitive account of security policy in India. His earlier book, published a decade ago and a result of his doctoral dissertation, is probably the most quoted publication on Indian defence issues, and rightly so.

This publication is more than just a rehash and update of the previous book even though Thomas uses a lot of material from his doctoral work and both essays overlap to a considerable degree. The key differences lie in the author's considerable additional research involving interviews and the painstaking combing of primary source material to reveal the complexity of the decision-making process.

Consequently, this is a required text for an understanding of India's security perceptions and defence policy and posture. It is extremely rich in detail and analysis, particularly in relation to the defence decision-making process which is currently the subject of considerable debate within India. Should the Indian government rationalise the policy-making process to bring the military closer to the Political Affairs Committee of

the Cabinet, the hub of defence decision-making, or would such a move heighten the power of the military with all the attendant risks of both militarism and militarisation? Should the growing acceptance that internal and external security problems are inherently linked result in the formation of a Ministry of National Security Affairs, or something else to make national security decision-making and policy implementation more effective?

Nevertheless, there are several things missing in this book. First, there is a curious total acceptance of the proposition that since independence India has reacted to the threats and postures of Pakistan. The obvious suggestion that the 'action-reaction' cycle might cut both ways is not considered, even though India's initial defence build-up preceded the original US-Pakistan military aid agreement in the mid-1950s and accelerated thereafter: until the 1962 Sino-Indian war Indian defence expenditure was low but it still exceeded that of Pakistan by a factor of three and, in addition, India was procuring equipment from Britain without payment, on the basis of the sterling balances. Equally, although Thomas accepts that Indian procurement since the Reagan Zia economic and military aid agreement has been somewhat extreme and erratic, he does not pursue the matter nor does he investigate sufficiently closely to what extent India's phenomenal modernisation programme followed the announcement of the US aid package to Pakistan. For example, negotiations for the Mirage 2000 were started some time *before* the aid agreement even though deliveries came after and the deal was debated in the press as a means of offsetting the F-16 destined for Pakistan. Although Thomas correctly observes the fact that Parliament is the final arbiter on defence allocations he does not fully explain why the annual debates are so low key and so poorly attended. Nor does the author analyse why the Indian defence industry has not performed particularly well or why Hindustan Aeronautics Limited was starved of contracts through the 1970s even though India has technological expertise in abundance for a developing country, and defence self-sufficiency has been a policy goal since 1947.

In 1987 India received 27 per cent of all the major weapons exported to the Third World. Granted, India is still involved in a far reaching modernisation process whilst the inventories of many other developing countries are saturated. However, the cost has been spectacular, particularly in terms of foreign exchange, and the impact upon India's internal debt and upon regional relations has been considerable. In a full-length study such as this, the reader would want to know much more about the dynamics of such a process even if the links between defence expenditure and underdevelopment are much less straightforward in India than perhaps they are elsewhere. India remains one of the poorest countries in the world yet operates a range of the most sophisticated and expensive aircraft available on the market, two aircraft carriers and nuclear and space programmes which both have a military rationale and justification. The scale of the defence build-up has been extreme, yet India is far from beleaguered; it does not fear superpower intervention nor does Pakistan pose the threat suggested by the response. Clearly, there are other factors at work within the Indian decision-making centres which might offer additional explanations.

Nevertheless, the author should be commended for an excellent piece of work which is obviously the result of painstaking research and attention to detail. It is also written with an economical and straightforward style. Despite a number of queries con-

cerning the direction of the analysis this is a valuable piece of research and by far the most useful book in this area to have been produced for several years.

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Pakistan Society: Islam, ethnicity and leadership in South Asia

Akbar S Ahmed

Karachi: Oxford University Press. 1986. 264pp. n/p

Akbar S Ahmed has brought together a collection of essays in a varied repertoire impelled by both piety and wit. The book is divided into three parts, with the papers in the first two parts grouped around the theme of Islam, ethnicity and leadership. The third part contains essays in which Ahmed provides an anthropologist's insight into events whose significance often escapes the average citizen merely because they are part of everyday life. Given the range of essays, this review will focus on three important propositions propounded by Ahmed.

The first proposition, concerning Pakistan's political culture, states that 'there is an in-built structural mechanism to check extreme forms and expressions of politics in Pakistan'. The explanation for this cultural restraint on politics in Pakistan lies, according to Ahmed, in the Western liberal ethos of both the army and the civil services. This is a rather simplistic explanation for the apparent lack of political radicalism in the body politic. One can suggest in counter position to Ahmed, that extreme forms of politics do not normally emanate from the army or civil services, regardless of whether or not they are imbued by Western liberal values. The impulse for political radicalism in South Asia has usually originated in those strata of society, which have been denied a place in the structure of power. Historical examples of this phenomenon are the peasants in the 1971 Sri Lanka insurrection, in the Naxalite uprising in West Bengal, and the people of East Bengal during the 1971 Bangladesh war, and, more recently, the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Sikhs in Indian Punjab, and Sindhi nationalism in Pakistan today.

Ahmed's contention that there is a cultural thermostat in Pakistan that checks extreme forms of politics may be true only in the sphere of the formal political system: the institutions that the military bureaucratic elite has *itself* fostered to perpetuate its dominance over civil society. The strength of this political system lies in its ability to exclude a formal expression of the popular desire for subordinating the military bureaucratic elite to civil society. Yet, what bears investigation is the possibility that this in-built structural mechanism of *exclusion*, while it appears as a strength of the system for the elite, may actually be its weakness when viewed from the perspective of national solidarity. For, as the social and regional base of the wielders of formal political power narrows, the aspirations of social groups who are denied access to the power structure and/or are coerced by it, are increasingly expressed in the form of sub-nationalist and militant assertions of ethnic identity. This trend is observable in the recurrent explosion of ethnic violence in Karachi, the sustained assertion of Sindhi nationalism in the rural areas of Sind, the Baluch uprising in the early 1970s and Bengali nationalism in what is today Bangladesh.

Ahmed's second proposition is that there were four major elements in the crisis of seventeenth-century India, which marked the beginning of the end of the Mughal epoch: the political crisis resulting from the geographic expanse of the Mughal Indian empire in an era of poor communications; the application of 'internal pressure' by cultural religious movements such as Hindu revivalism; the emergence of ethnic identity as a new sociopolitical phenomenon, as embodied in the movement of the Marathas and the Sikhs; the advent of Europeans into India at a time when the nascent industrial revolution in Europe was generating new military and economic technologies.

While each of these factors provides interesting insights into the crisis of Muslim power in seventeenth-century India, they do not constitute an adequate explanation. They may instead be the surface manifestations of two underlying phenomena. The first was the tension between the Mughal attempt to build a large centralised state and the aspirations towards cultural autonomy of various communities in a multi-ethnic society. It is not enough merely to cite the emergence of ethnic identity as a new political phenomenon in the seventeenth century, as Ahmed has done, without asking why it occurred at that particular time. The answer has relevance for the crisis of state power in South Asia in the contemporary period: political centralisation and the imposition of a spurious cultural homogeneity were the imperatives of a ruling elite that was integrating regional markets in order to extract a larger surplus. Such administrative and political initiatives induce over a period of time insecurity amongst communities whose religious and ethnic identities differ from those of the ruling elite, and who lack access to state power. At the same time, in order to contain incipient resistance against centralisation, ruling elites have politically manipulated one community against another, and used coercive force. Invariably the protective response of the oppressed community has been that its local elite has mobilised people to assert a militant sub-national or ethnic identity. The second feature underlying, in my view, the crisis of the seventeenth-century state in India, was the Mughal state's failure to play a catalysing role in achieving an industrial revolution in India, despite the fact that, in terms of its natural resource endowments, the country had a far greater potential for industrialisation than Britain.

Ahmed's third proposition is that there are two major models of leadership in South Asian Islam, between which Muslim society in the region has oscillated. The model A leader is characterised by belief in orthodox legalistic Islam; emphasis on *ummah* (Muslim community), discouragement of art and support for *ulema* (clergy), and is exemplified by Aurangzeb and General Zia-ul-Haq. The model B leader is characterised by a belief in syncretic Islam and universal humanity, encouragement of art, hostility to the clergy and support for the Sufis, and is exemplified by Dara Shikoh and, (despite Berkeley and Oxford) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. According to Ahmed, while Dara Shikoh tried to include elements of Hinduism into Islam, Bhutto incorporated into Islam elements from the dominant ideology of his time, socialism. On the other hand, Zia is seen by Ahmed as the spiritual descendant of Aurangzeb: personally austere, committed to orthodox Islam and to an attempt to bring Muslim society into line with the *Sharia*.

The formulation of the two leadership models allows an interesting comparison of the leaders in question. However, the weakness of such a comparison based on a simple listing of characteristics is that it assumes out the concrete historical circumstances and political power structures within which the personality traits of the leaders develop and manifest themselves. History cannot be seen simply as the result of the character traits

of individual leaders. Nor are these observed traits purely pathological, but rather develop as individuals intervene in historical circumstances. The methodological weakness of Ahmed's 'models approach' becomes apparent when he draws his conclusions about history. He contends that the death warrants signed by Aurangzeb and Zia for Dara Shikoh and Bhutto respectively, represent the 'continuity of tension between Model A and Model B in historical perspective'. Such a conclusion presents the two executions as if they were historically inevitable, resulting from the interplay of abstract models rather than the actions of individuals struggling to preserve their political power. Had Ahmed focused on actual history rather than a stylised static comparison, he would have discovered that Aurangzeb and Zia had very different locations in the structures of world power politics. The execution of Z. A. Bhutto, for instance, had less to do with the model of Zia-ul-Haq's personality and more to do with the facts that the political forces that Bhutto could unleash, directly threatened the interests of the domestic establishment, a foreign superpower and Zia's own political survival.

Some of the essays in Akbar S Ahmed's collection are journalistic and lack a strong theoretical underpinning. Yet they are consistently stimulating and occasionally provocative. His insights into sociological attitudes underlying everyday behaviour in Pakistan are luminous and often open up fresh new perspectives.

AKMAL HUSSAIN

Lahore

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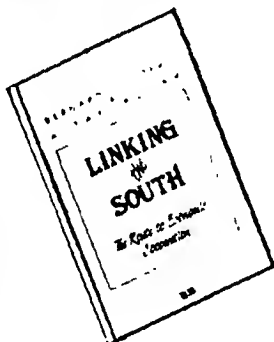


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An independent Namibia? The future facing SWAPO

The significance of the recent diplomatic initiatives on the problems of Southwestern Africa lies in their breaking the disturbing impasse on the Namibian question. The signing of the historic 'tripartite agreement' in New York on 22 December 1988 (Resolution 435), which was the culmination of a series of talks between Angola, Cuba and South Africa, has reassured many observers that independence is imminent. Unlike previous attempts, the agreement, which establishes 1 April 1989 as the date for the beginning of the independence process, is pregnant with hope.

This article provides a critical review of the main economic and socio-political challenges likely to confront the future Namibian government, which we assume, for reasons briefly indicated below and barring any unforeseen and serious reverse, to be the South West African Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO). The realities of Namibia's political and economic structure will shape its economy after independence; the evolution of SWAPO (its relationship with different classes, ethnic and political groups, traditional chiefs and churches and its ability to operate inside Namibia) has implications not only for the independence and electoral processes, but also for its handling of the socio-economic challenges of the immediate post-independence period.

The key to SWAPO's political strength and electoral potential lies in its class base. As the vanguard of a liberation movement sparked by workers' struggle (which led to the establishment of the formidable National Union of Namibian Workers [NUNW]), SWAPO's legitimacy has meant that its most consistent leadership has come from the ranks of the Namibian working class. It has, however, moved on to mobilise the peasants and middle class.

A similar story holds for SWAPO's ethnic base. Though most of its guerrilla cadre has been drawn from the numerically preponderant Ovambo community, it has, on the whole, made a systematic and con-

The views expressed in this study are the personal views of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the UN Institute for Namibia.

scious effort to draw in members of almost all the Namibian communities, fostering a sense of national unity amongst the Namibian masses.

Neither has there been any effective opposition to SWAPO. The groups which exist are generally seen to be allies of South Africa. The Namibian National Front (the NNF, once the major centrist party) functions more on paper than in reality, although nominally it brought together the South West African Union (SWANU, a Herero dominated, largely urban political entity), the White Federal Party (a largely paper organisation with few members) and other more minor organisations. SWAPO Democrats has a much reduced following and the Namibian Independence Party (run by Kenneth Abrahams, a coloured physician) has few adherents, whilst, significantly, a faction of the traditional leadership headed by Chief Munjuku II of the Mbanderu Council announced its intention to join SWAPO in October 1988.

Only the Herero community provides the South African sponsored Multi-Party Conference (MPC) with a more genuine measure of support, through the Herero Chiefs Council and NUDO, the best organised black constituent of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA).

Together with backing from anti-apartheid clergy, the ability to operate with a legal presence inside Namibia and lack of an effective opposition, these factors place SWAPO in a position of considerable strength in any freely conducted election.

A critical examination of the UN plan (R435 and subsequent amendments by the contact group in 1982) provokes a series of crucial questions. Whether, for instance, the necessary political will is present, even if the Cuban withdrawal is executed; whether South Africa will implement both the letter and spirit of R435 or will use numerous procedural devices, administrative tactics and even legitimate but secondary grievances to make an already difficult process even harder. There are also questions about the absolute size of UNTAG and the pre-electoral disposition and placement of SWAPO guerrillas. Other worries relate to the conduct of the campaign, the registration of voters, delimitation of constituencies and the detailed organisation of the elections. A Constituent Assembly is to be elected by popular vote. Who will convene it? Who will administer Namibia during this period? If it is to be South Africa, as the plan indicates, can it intervene to influence the deliberations of the assembly? Will South Africa be permitted to prevent the assembly from completing its work or to refuse to ratify any results that are decided upon by less than the required two-thirds majority?

Assuming a smooth transition, how will Namibia assume its independence? Since R435 is not self-implementing, differences on implementation are to be expected.

The twelve-paragraph document embodying R435 is necessarily so broad that there is great scope for argument over interpretation. A particularly troublesome aspect of the peace plan is the understanding that a South African-appointed Administrator-General will be responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Namibia during the transition period leading up to the election of a Constituent Assembly. Instead of being required to withdraw immediately (as stipulated under R385 in 1976) the South African occupation regime, under R435, would remain in Namibia until independence. This is particularly worrying in view of the fact that the original UN military contingent of 7,500 and the 1,500 non-policing element or civil servants has, in response to the Security Council Resolution 639 of 16 January 1989, been reduced to 4,650 without a corresponding reduction in the South African military contingent from the 1978 figure of 1,500 troops.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council have argued that since the New York tripartite agreement of December 1988, the situation in Namibia has so changed for the better that there is no need for the UN to send the full complement of some 9,000 personnel, as originally agreed upon in 1978. It is, however, quite evident that despite the peace accord on Southwestern Africa, South Africa has not in the least abandoned its hegemonic ambitions in Namibia. Prior to the signing of the agreement, South Africa had reinforced its already huge occupation army in Namibia by a further division, and thousands of South African troops withdrawn from Angola in August 1988 are concentrated in Namibia. Namibia is now a huge military garrison.¹ In 1978, when R435 was adopted, South Africa had 45,000 troops and 8,300 police as well as an auxiliary unit (the South West Africa Territory Force) which numbers more than 35,000 men.² Even though the South African Administrator-General will be under the supervision of the UN Special Representative, it could be argued that, in the light of the present situation in Namibia, free and fair elections would be threatened by the law and order agencies of the Administrator-General. This must be seen against the background of the unbroken record of South Afri-

¹ 'UN sets in motion the process towards Namibian independence', *Information and Comments*, 19 January 1989. See also speech by Hidipo Hamutenya, SWAPO Secretary for Information and Publicity, to the tenth graduation ceremony of the UN Institute for Namibia, Lusaka, 21 January 1989.

² *Ibid.*

can perfidy in relation to Namibia and all its other relationships in Southern Africa.

Of particular importance is the fact that the Pretoria-appointed Administrator-General enjoys considerable latitude under R435 during the seven-month transition period. From 1 April 1989 he will be jointly responsible with the UN Special Representative for Namibia for implementation of R435. The Administrator-General, with the assistance of the South West African police, will remain in charge of law and order, and can call upon links to the South African police. Given South Africa's anti-SWAPO stance, SWAPO faces the challenge of ensuring that the UN discharges its responsibility for free and fair elections as enshrined in R435. The positive role of the UN Special Representative will be crucial during the implementation process.

There is also controversy over the sovereignty of Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep-water port, and the extent to which it could serve the interest of South Africa during the R435 implementation process. South Africa claims the Walvis Bay enclave for itself, even though the UN Security Council has ruled in Resolution 432 (1978) that the status of Walvis Bay is a matter for negotiation between an independent Namibia and South Africa. SWAPO, whose case is supported by the UN General Assembly and the UN Council for Namibia, regards Walvis Bay as part of Namibia. The South African Defence Force (SADF) regards the issue as crucial, since under R435, there is nothing to prevent it from relocating some of the troops currently in northern Namibia to the 1,214 sq km Walvis Bay enclave which contains the major Rooikop military base. It is likely that Walvis Bay, in consequence, would constitute a major threat to the implementation process.

More significantly, Pretoria's freedom of manoeuvre is increased by the vagueness of the electoral procedures envisaged by R435 and the subsequent modifications contained in the constitutional principles drafted by the Contact Group in 1982, which provide, *inter alia*, for decisions of the Constituent Assembly to be taken by a two-thirds majority. These have received almost no mention in the euphoria accompanying the 22 December 1988 independence agreement. While under R435 registration of voters and other electoral arrangements are to be agreed jointly by the UN Special Representative and the South African Administrator-General, the latter's knowledge of local conditions and control of the bureaucracy will give Pretoria considerable influence. On the whole, the Lancaster House agreement on Zimbabwe independence

was much more favourable to the Patriotic Front than Resolution 435 is to SWAPO.

One other challenge to SWAPO and to the independence process as a whole relates to the choice of electoral system: whether the voting should be by constituencies or by a system of party lists. This issue does not appear to have been fully settled, even though the choice of an electoral system was the main cause of the collapse of negotiations in the early 1980s. The Security Council has (in Resolution 539 of October 1983) clarified that the electoral system to be used for the election of the Constituent Assembly should be determined before approving the enabling resolution for the implementation of the UN Plan. On the other hand, after some considerable prevarication, South Africa has argued that the choice of electoral system will be settled without difficulties as soon as Cuban troops are withdrawn from Angola.³

SWAPO has never favoured a system of voting by constituencies. It is aware of the difficulties involved in devising a fair allocation of constituencies, bearing in mind the widely-scattered nature of the Namibian population and the concentration of over half the African population in the north with most whites in Windhoek. Secondly, voting by constituencies would tip the scale considerably in favour of South Africa since the constituencies would be designed by South African civil servants who might use 'inaccurate demographic data'. Besides, it has been generally recognised that this system would provide sufficient scope for gerrymandering by concentrating the 60,000 or more returning Namibian refugees—likely SWAPO voters—into a few constituencies and making maximum use of the large numbers of Angolan supporters of UNITA now present in Kavangoland, who may well end up being registered as voters. SWAPO is already receiving reports on UNITA forces moving into Namibia and being issued with Namibian resident cards.⁴ A recent UNIN seminar paper has recommended a party-list system as the most favourable option for SWAPO.⁵ This would in principle provide it with an excellent opportunity for capitalising on the well-known personalities heading its internal and external wings.

However, to enable SWAPO to present the broadest possible front in the election campaign and to prevent any possibility of tension or discord in its rank and file (to which a system of devising a list of SWAPO

³ UN Doc s/16219, 22 November 1983; and UN Doc s/16106, 29 October 1983.

⁴ Speech by Hidipo Hamutenya, 21 January 1989.

⁵ M Ncube and C Parker, 'Comparative electoral systems: options for independent Namibia' (a seminar working paper), Lusaka: UNIN, October 1988.

candidates could give rise) the SWAPO leadership would have to exercise a great deal of caution and tact, if they were to derive maximum advantage from the party-list system. This is important because any such tension or discord is likely to be publicised and capitalised by anti-SWAP0 parties. Aware of this tendency, SWAPO has already embarked on a national policy of reconciliation, as evidenced in the October 1988 talks held in Zambia with a delegation of some 200 Namibians, including representatives of 'progressive' whites headed by Bryan O'Linn and traditional African leaders including some Ovambo, Herero and Nama chiefs, plus a member of the Ovambo second-tier administration, Franz Iindongo. In order to ensure two-thirds support for a SWAPO-led front in the Constituent Assembly, SWAPO could give prominence in its slate of candidates to some politically popular non-party members.

There are no doubt quite a number of pressing hurdles yet to be overcome during the implementation process. Resolution 435 or any other basis of settlement can be thwarted by any of the parties, particularly by South Africa, given its continuing administrative role. The power of the United Nations lies in its authority to confer legitimacy on the electoral process. But the question remains whether, when independence is finally achieved, Namibians will come together in good faith under SWAPO leadership to reach that degree of consensus which provides the basis of government today. Or will Namibians of various factions, perhaps influenced by past and continuing South African attitudes and policies, take positions which they know can never be acceptable to the other and thus make consensus impossible? Finally, can Namibians find the necessary patience to evolve a government and, more importantly, initiate development strategies appropriate to the country?

The state of the economy

A brief assessment of the country's current economic state and its prospects during the transition to independence has to play a key role in speculation about the performance of SWAPO in post-independent Namibia. For, to a great extent, how the new state of Namibia is organised will depend upon the factors that have characterised the Namibian economy in recent years and the nature of its socio-economic structure that SWAPO will inherit.

It is worth noting at the outset that opinions diverge over the evaluation of the prospects for Namibia's future development. As Wolfgang

Thomas points out, some observers are of the view that the country is 'poor in resources, economically unstable, and hampered by nature'. Others believe that it is one of the 'best-endowed African countries relative to its population'.⁶ A recent UNIN perspective study has noted that while the country is endowed with abundant mineral and other resources, its economy in the 1980s is unsatisfactory in output per capita terms; disastrous in output per capita trend; highly skewed and dis-integrated in structure and radically inequalitarian in its distribution system. It also has a massive fiscal imbalance, a grossly mismanaged public sector, and is vulnerable to diverse exogenous factors.⁷ This sharp deterioration in recent years is due principally to negative changes in the external economic environment, prolonged fiscal mismanagement, and finally to gross mismanagement and excessive exploitation of Namibia's mineral and fishery resources.

Although figures for gross domestic product only give a limited view of a country's economic growth and development, they can furnish an initial indication of long-term trends.

The Namibian economy is excessively dependent on primary production. Mining, agriculture and fishing sectors account for about 35–45 per cent of recorded GDP and 85–90 per cent of total exports. In value terms, Namibia is the fourth largest producer of minerals in Africa, and the seventeenth in the world.⁸ Although in recent years minerals have accounted for almost half of the territory's GDP, the mining sector is a small generator of employment, accounting for about 5 per cent of wage employment. On the other hand, in spite of its low contribution to GDP, agriculture is one of the most important single economic activities in Namibia because it provides a livelihood for the largest number of people and plays a central role in Namibia's economic development. About 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas. Like many other African countries, Namibia has a poorly developed secondary sector. Only about 250 manufacturing units are found in the country, the majority of which are engaged in the production of consumer goods, largely for the white elites. This sector provides employment to only 4.6 per cent of the economically active population. The tertiary sector (services such as distribution and commerce, transport

⁶ W 11 Thomas, 'The economy in transition to independence', in R 1 Roxberg (ed), *Namibia: political and economic prospects*, Lexington, Massachusetts: D C Heath, 1983, p 46.

⁷ UN Institute for Namibia, *Namibia: perspectives for national reconstruction and development*, Lusaka: UNIN, 1986, abridged edition p 16.

⁸ UN Institute for Namibia, *Namibia: a direct UN responsibility*, Lusaka: UN Institute for Namibia, 1987, p 15.

and communications, banking, insurance and public administration) accounts for over 30 per cent of GDP.

Namibia's per capita GDP compares well with that of other African states of similar population size. Specifically, its per capita income of about \$1,200 is higher than that of any other country in Africa except South Africa. These comparative figures are, however, misleading in as much as income inequalities are far greater in Namibia than in many other countries. Namibia is rich but Namibians are poor. Income is unequally distributed between whites and blacks. Black to white income ratios vary between 1:24 in the rural areas and 1:12 in urban areas.⁹ In 1975, for example, the average annual household income of whites in Namibia was the equivalent of \$9,415, compared with \$2,448 among urban black households, and \$578 among black households in the rural subsistence areas.¹⁰

Although on the whole the Namibian economy is, as Thomas argues, 'stronger than those of many other southern and central African countries' and its performance in recent years in terms of the growth in GDP, government revenues, infrastructural development, exports and household income has been 'impressive',¹¹ the nature of the political socio-economic challenges that would confront the new government would seem to be much more complex and pressing than those faced by any other African country at independence. These challenges, spreading as they do across almost every sector of Namibian economy and society, would be the main concern of a future SWAPO government.

Perhaps the first and most obvious of these challenges relates to the social, economic and political fragility of Namibia, and the limitations that this should place on a radical restructuring of the economy in the short term. Given the need for economic stability in the initial stages of independence, the importance of stabilising manpower resources can hardly be overemphasised. The new government would want to avoid, or at best minimise, what has been described as 'an exodus of frightened or disenchanted whites',¹² who represent the bulk of the skilled workforce. This is particularly important with respect to the civil service, for the prospects for instability are greater there than in other sectors of the economy, due to its domination by Afrikaans-speaking whites who allegedly support the National Party of Southwest Africa and are loyal

⁹ *Windhoek Advertiser*, 22 May 1981, p 1.

¹⁰ W H Thomas, 'The economy in transition to independence', p 54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p 67.

¹² K Jowell, 'Economic priorities for independent Namibia', in *Namibia: political and economic prospects*, p 94.

to South Africa. A recent UNIN study notes, for example, that in the 1970s fewer than ten blacks were in senior managerial and administrative positions (compared with over 2,000 whites). Also, only 5,300 blacks were in professional categories, these being almost exclusively school teachers (3,700) and nurses.¹³ In agriculture, the confidence of the predominantly white farmers must be maintained, not simply because of the value of agricultural production as an export but also to secure the jobs of the 44,000 blacks who are engaged in this sector.

Although Namibia has a sufficient indigenous population to meet any manpower needs, its people are poorly educated and lack training. A major constraint that would face a SWAPO government, therefore, is the shortage of Namibians with sufficient skills to operate the administration and fill senior level posts throughout the modern sector of the economy. This is a vital issue, as the continued functioning of the commercial economy, especially mining and agriculture, at a reasonable level of efficiency will be crucial to maintaining existing levels of production. Second, the investment of any surplus from these productive sectors is likely to be geared to expanding educational facilities and employment opportunities, upgrading skills, and developing potential resources, particularly in the agricultural sector.

However, given the probable complexity of the issues in the early years of Namibia's independence, implementation of the policy of maintaining man-power resources would be difficult, as SWAPO's room for manoeuvre would be limited by the economic and administrative structure inherited from Pretoria. No matter how short the transition phase, it would be extremely risky, if not foolhardy, on the part of a SWAPO government to trust and maintain a large body of senior civil servants who were implicitly, and in some cases explicitly, loyal to the Republic of South Africa and its National Party. To what extent could a SWAPO government rely upon this inherited bureaucracy for the execution of its policy? The government might well be sowing the seeds of its own eventual destruction.

Also, maintaining existing manpower resources, even as an immediate and short-term measure, would seem to be on a collision course with policies aimed at relieving unemployment, as avenues for employment in the vital sectors of the economy would be blocked. The existence and seriousness of Namibia's unemployment problem is documented in a recent analysis of the problem by Thomas which stressed the urgent

¹³ UN Institute for Namibia: *Namibia: a direct UN responsibility*, p 26.

need for creating employment opportunities for 'at least 9,000 per year, to take into account the annual increase in the local labour force' and gradually absorbing as many as possible of 'approximately 75,000 unemployed Namibians', as well as '40,000 "underemployment" persons' and those individuals being released from the peasant agricultural sector.¹⁴ Since employment opportunities are woefully limited, open unemployment is likely to become a major threat to Namibia's post-independence political stability.

To redress the grievances of the majority of the black population and to ensure social and distributive justice for all Namibians irrespective of skin colour, sex or creed, concurrent with the reconstruction of the war-torn economy, the independence government will be confronted with the problem of ensuring the continuity and development of production particularly in the three main areas of the economy—mining, agriculture, and secondary industry and commerce. As in post-independence Zimbabwe and Angola after 1975, sustaining and boosting activity in the main productive sectors to enable them to provide adequate levels of state revenue would be a top priority. It must be pointed out, however, that the continued production of the mining sector in particular would be heavily influenced by the political and economic policies that a SWAPO government would pursue: how it would approach taxes and investment incentives; whether profit would continue to be repatriable; how wage levels would be set; whether the government would want a share of ownership.

These are some of the most complex policy issues which a future Namibian government will face in its dealing with foreign interests represented mainly by Western and South African-based transnational corporations (TNCs), whose exploitation of Namibian mines and other resources have been a subject of international concern since the late 1970s.¹⁵ The mining sector has received considerable attention from the SWAPO leadership, since it will continue to provide the main source of foreign exchange and government revenue for the foreseeable future; it constitutes by far the largest sector of the Namibian economy and accounts for about half of the country's GDP. Although mining companies have enjoyed generous tax concessions and taken advantage of

¹⁴ W H Thomas, 'The economy in transition to independence', p 52.

¹⁵ See, for example, R Murray *et al.*, *The Role of Foreign Firms in Namibia*, Uppsala, Sweden: African Publications Trust, 1974; and especially the series of recent volumes by the UN Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations in South Africa and Namibia: United Nations public hearings*, 1986.

loopholes to avoid payments, they nevertheless contribute about 40–50 per cent of revenues from taxation.¹⁶

Obviously, a SWAPO government would not want to kill the 'goose that lays the golden egg'. The government would almost certainly, at least initially, adopt a selective approach to state intervention, involving equity shareholdings in the main existing mining and other strategic industries, forming part of an overall renegotiation of the operating conditions for existing multinationally controlled concerns. Simply put, it would seek to renegotiate existing agreements in order to provide for greater control and increase its earnings. This need not involve outright nationalisation or even majority state holdings as an essential prerequisite. The renegotiation would involve not only equity, but also such matters as tax considerations and rate of exploitation of ores. Also, fiscal measures, legislation, and an effective Namibian mining industry and geological survey department would be among the other instruments available to a SWAPO government.

Namibia would seem to have certain strengths within the context of renegotiation. The country has proven reserves in gem diamonds, uranium, copper, zinc, lead and other minerals, and 'some of these are strategic for the economies of the Western world'.¹⁷ Besides, the government would possess important legal advantages in renegotiating conditions imposed by contracts which the International Court of Justice, in accordance with its 1971 advisory opinion, has held are not valid.¹⁸ This is different from what happened in Botswana or Kenya, for example, where previous contracts had a degree of legitimacy in that they were legally signed by an acknowledged sovereign power, albeit a colonial one.

However, there are limits to the strength of Namibia's negotiating position. As stated above, the continued efficient operation of the productive sectors is essential to a functioning economy. There will not be enough trained Namibians to achieve that. Therefore, as suggested at a workshop on Namibia on TNCs and national development, 'either present TNCs, new TNCs, expatriate contract management (without ownership) or individual hired expatriate managers and professionals will

¹⁶ Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Mining: mines and independence*, London, 1983, p 30.

¹⁷ C Vaitos, 'Transnational corporations in the future of Namibia', in R H Green *et al* (eds), *Namibia: the last colony*, London: Longman, 1981, p 220.

¹⁸ UN Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations in South Africa and Namibia: United Nations public hearings*, Vol 1, *Reports of the Panel of Eminent Persons and of the Secretary-General*, ST/CTC/68, New York: United Nations, 1986, p 113.

be essential'.¹⁹ In some cases, the dislocation costs of the sudden replacement of present TNC management and personnel would be high. That cost is a necessary factor in shaping a Namibian negotiating stance even though it may, in some cases, be a cost worth paying.

The problem of dependency

An important aspect of Namibia's 'loaded inheritance' that must exercise the mind of a new Namibian government, and particularly a SWAPO government, is South Africa's domination of the economy and infrastructural services of the territory and the extent to which future relations with South Africa constitute one of the most difficult aspects of an independent Namibia's development strategy. Namibia is almost totally dependent on economic ties with South Africa. Of the nine Southern African countries, it is the most dependent, because, for more than seventy-five years, Namibia has been administered by South Africa virtually as a fifth province. Its economy is integrated into South Africa's in a measure unparalleled elsewhere in Southern Africa.

Specifically, close to 90 per cent of Namibia's imports come from South Africa, and 90 per cent of its exports go to South Africa; of its imports, 60-75 per cent are of South African origin. Not surprisingly, South Africa's economic grip on Namibia has been described as a 'stranglehold': South Africa owns the rail-transport system, the airline, the entire communications network, and the only viable port (Walvis Bay); it supplies the territory's oil and coal; most civil servants are South Africans; Namibia is knitted into the Rand Monetary Area and the Southern African Customs Union. All corporations involved in the exploitation of Namibia's resources conduct their operations by means of licences issued by the South African regime. Despite the establishment of a quasi-autonomous bureaucracy in Windhoek, the key decisions affecting Namibia's economy are taken by the government of South Africa in the light of its own economic priorities. There is no central bank in Namibia, and capital and other financial flows are neither restricted nor monitored in any systematic way. Foreign exchange control and external transactions are handled by the South African Reserve Bank, and goods entering or leaving Namibia are subject to South African tariffs. All this raises a set of crucial questions on policy issues that a new Namibian government must address: whether it should, for example, detach itself

¹⁹ *Workshop on Namibia on Transnational Corporations and Development*, 17-21 September 1984, Rio de Janeiro, documentation 1, p 11.

from the Rand Monetary Area and establish separate currency and separate monetary authority; whether there is value (following Botswana) in retaining a customs union with South Africa; what possibilities exist for Namibia's reduction of its dependence on South Africa.

It is clear that given its extreme dependence on South Africa, the room for manoeuvre by a Namibian government in almost all aspects of development—political, socioeconomic, and even security—would seem to be seriously limited. Black Africa is familiar with economic constraints on political decision-making, but its former colonial powers were thousands of miles away in Western Europe; in Southern Africa, and especially in the case of Namibia, the contemporary metropolitan power is white South Africa, which has a vested political interest not only in maintaining the existing economic dependence but in extending and consolidating it. If Namibia is sensitive to its dependence on South Africa, South Africa is equally conscious of its ability to capitalise on the situation. This would create a disquieting situation for a SWAPO government whose decision-making independence would be severely checked by its economic dependence on South Africa.

There is also the danger of South Africa's intervention or destabilisation of the government, a possibility reinforced by the pattern of South Africa's policy towards neighbouring Botswana, Mozambique, Angola, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Would Namibia be an exception? Above all, there is a dilemma that a SWAPO government would have to resolve: the familiar crisis of the high expectations among SWAPO's followers clashing with the realities of dependence. A psychological crisis of trust would also arise. Although SWAPO supporters would look to their government for the tangible evidence that independence had been achieved, South Africa and the transnationals would expect contrary reassurances to allay their fears of radical change.

Against the background of these formidable constraints posed by the complexity of Namibia's dependence on South Africa, SWAPO's priorities would have to be practical rather than ideological, with national unity and orderly development at the top of the list. Pragmatism, in fact, would be the only course of action if Namibia were to follow Botswana's road to political pluralism and mineral-based prosperity. SWAPO knows that Namibia cannot detach itself completely from South Africa in the foreseeable future without ruinous consequences, and that disengagement will be possible only when it can be done with economic and political safety. In the short to medium term, therefore, Namibia will remain logistically dependent on South Africa, even though a negotiated transfer of control

over Namibia's railways, harbours and other vital communications from South African parastatals may be rapidly achieved. Pragmatic considerations would suggest a balance between greater assertion of national interests and the continuation of advantageous economic ties.

In the long-term perspective, however, Namibia does not appear to be as helpless as has recently been suggested. Examined critically, a number of policy options would be available to a SWAPO government in its relations with South Africa. Despite Security Council Resolution 432 (1978) on Walvis Bay, negotiations on transit rights could be prejudicial to the independence of Namibia or the viability of its economy. Therefore, pending the reintegration of Walvis Bay within Namibia, a SWAPO government could mobilise internal and external resources to establish alternative port facilities to handle essential imports such as petroleum products and exports such as copper. The composition of Namibia's foreign trade is such that some of the most important products—diamonds, uranium and processed meat—are already being airlifted not to South Africa but to Europe. For petroleum products, Namibia could negotiate with Angola for transportation of supplies to the north of Namibia for redistribution to other parts of the country.

Seeking alternative export and import markets for Namibia's commodities presently exported to and imported from South Africa may be a priority concern of a SWAPO government. In this connection, a distinction must be made between exports to and imports from South Africa on the one hand, and imports/exports via South Africa on the other. An analysis of the present situation by a UNIN occasional paper²⁰ suggests that diamonds, for example, are exported via and not to South Africa and sold by De Beers in London. Uranium exports have not been known to be exported either to or via South Africa although there is no doubt that South Africa has been stealing Namibian uranium for use in its nuclear enrichment plant; present sales are on long-term contracts to six developed countries—USA, UK, France, West Germany, Canada and Japan. Blister copper is not exported to but through South Africa, and about 60 per cent of fish and fish products are sold to countries other than South Africa. So far as Namibia's export trade is concerned, therefore, the South African market has no critical leverage over Namibia. The conclusion is reinforced in a study²¹ by the German

²⁰ UN Institute for Namibia, *Trade and Development: some policy considerations for independent Namibia*, prepared by W W Asombang, Lusaka: UNIN, 1985, p 35.

²¹ W Schneider-Barthold, *Namibia's Economic Potential and Existing Economic Ties with the Republic of South Africa*, Berlin: GDI, 1977, pp 35–43.

Development Institute. Assessing the true trading patterns and composition of Namibia's trade with South Africa, this study concludes that so long as there is demand for Namibian raw materials, there can be no talk, especially from a medium to long-term perspective, of total dependence on South Africa. Nor, it should be stressed, does South Africa have any monopoly over Namibia's import requirements. A case may be made for buying certain imports from South Africa based purely on financial cost-saving considerations due to the proximity of South Africa. It could be argued, however, that due to double handling, agents fees and customs clearing, importation via South Africa may increase the cost of imports into Namibia.

Secondly, an independent Namibia would have the choice not only of diversifying its investment and trading partners away from South Africa but also of becoming a member of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which aims at reducing dependence on developed Western societies and especially on South Africa. Indeed, provision has already been made for the rapid integration of Namibia into SADCC's existing regional development strategy. Besides weakening South Africa's grip, better transport links with SADCC members—perhaps involving a revival of the shelved trans-Kalahari railway project—would help to diversify trade and open Namibia's economy to broader cooperation with other independent states in the sub-region. Namibia could also join the Lomé Convention thereby gaining access to European Economic Community (EEC) markets and to aid programmes for the development of social and industrial infrastructures. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to apply for membership of the Commonwealth so as to benefit from that body's substantial technical aid. Membership of these organisations may expand Namibia's freedom to manoeuvre, and contribute to reducing physical and psychological dependence on South Africa. As Ali Mazrui stressed in his 1983 Reith Lectures:

There are occasions when freedom begins with the multiplication of one's masters. If one is owned and controlled by only one power, freedom is often particularly restrictive. But if an African society cultivates the skills to have more than one hegemonic power competing for it, this has possibilities for liberation.²²

²² A A Mazrui, *The African Condition: a political diagnosis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p 82.

The land issue challenge

Apart from the intricate 'dependence' question it is the vital land issue which is likely to be high on a new government's agenda. The issue is both fundamental and pressing because it is inextricably related to class differentiation, development and underdevelopment. Approximately 60 per cent of the land is reserved for whites (who constitute only 10 per cent of the total population). This land includes the urban and the best agricultural and ranching areas, the Namib with its mineral wealth and the game parks where ownership rights are limited to whites. On the other hand, blacks are confined to largely arid, barren and sandy soils unsuitable for cultivation and devoid even of proven mineral resources. While all land redistribution and control measures had so far been designed to establish the whites' supremacy over the blacks, the South African-appointed Odendaal Commission of 1962²³ recommended that 40 per cent of Namibia be partitioned into eleven *bantustans* ('home-lands') and that blacks be confined to these 'reserves'. Given this grim picture, it is not surprising that the importance of land as a critical issue in the liberation struggle is extensively documented in several UNIN studies.²⁴

At independence, therefore, a strategy to develop the present subsistence agricultural sector and provide land and employment to the rural population will prove to be one of the most challenging and vital policy areas for the new government. The Namibians' desire to free themselves from past injustices perpetrated by the colonial powers will bring intense pressure on the government to redress such wrongs as unequal land and income distribution, lack of educational opportunities, inadequate and unequal structures and other aspects of enforced racism. With particular reference to the land issue, questions must be resolved concerning the ownership of agricultural land in the so-called white areas, the utilisation of land in the tribal areas and property ownership in urban areas. In general, the small size of Namibia's population should enhance the possibilities for redistribution of land and wealth, but a SWAPO government would, nevertheless, have to proceed cautiously.

²³ *Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs*, 1962-63 (chairman: Odendaal) RP No 12/1964, Pretoria: Government Printer.

²⁴ See, for example, UN Institute for Namibia, *Towards Agrarian Reform: options for Namibia*, Lusaka: UNIN, 1979; *ibid*, combined seminar on fisheries, agrarian Reform, nutrition and agricultural education for Namibia, Lusaka, 9-11 September 1987.

Conclusion

This article does not pretend to have done full justice to the complexity and magnitude of the pressing problems and challenges posed by the Namibian independence process and the crucial period of transition to independence. It does, however, highlight the key obstacles in the way of implementation of the UN plan for Namibian independence and the basic issues confronting an inheriting, popularly elected SWAPO government. It has been noted that the implementation of the compromised Resolution 435 may prove to be difficult, as there are some complex obstacles yet to be overcome. Of particular importance is the fact that, despite the December 1988 New York accord, Pretoria remains convinced that it can and must keep SWAPO from assuming real power. Managing the political trauma of withdrawal in the face of a SWAPO victory appears impossible for any National Party government. South Africa is therefore likely to capitalise on the vagueness of the electoral procedures envisaged by R435 to prevent a sweeping victory by SWAPO, and the achievement of a fair, free and internationally acceptable electoral process will depend on the effectiveness of UNTAG and the UN Special Representative, who is instructed to take steps to guarantee against any possibility of intimidation or interference with the electoral process.

In spite of SWAPO's widespread legitimacy, the attainment of a two-thirds majority by SWAPO in the Constituent Assembly may be difficult to achieve: the SWAPO leadership will need to combat all manifestations and tendencies of tribalism, regionalism, ethnic orientation and racial discrimination. For electoral purposes, SWAPO's accommodation of the two communities which are likely to be the focus of electoral struggle—the Hereros and the Caprivians—would seem to be crucial. A presentation of the broadest possible front in the election campaign may enable SWAPO to enhance its chances of getting close to the two-thirds majority target.

Winning an electoral victory is one thing; meeting the challenges posed by the political and economic realities bequeathed to the new nation is another. The starting point of any Namibian government will be a universally condemned social and political system. The inheritance of an extremely polarised and, therefore, fragile society is crucial, for it is the inheritance of a lack of control by Namibians. In the initial stages of an independent Namibia a stable framework must be built, so that an orderly and more equitable development of the territory can then take place.

Namibia's dependence on South Africa is another matter for serious consideration. The challenges to Botha since 1982 from the right wing of the National Party have heightened fears of the domestic impact of a Namibian settlement. A SWAPO government could have dangerous repercussions for the National Party government in Pretoria both as an inspiration to South Africa's own black majority and as a focus for right-wing Afrikaner opposition.

Yet, once independence is achieved there are, as we have shown, many economic moves that Namibia could make to expand its freedom and thereby reduce its dependence.

Domestically, the land issue will prove to be one of the most vital areas of policy, since only radical reform of the inequalities and injustices of colonial society will meet the popular expectations forged in decades of suffering and struggle.

It is reasonable to expect that a SWAPO government would display the same high degree of pragmatism in the task of nation-building as many other black African countries. However, internal political pressures and a declining direct dependence on South Africa may make the government less hesitant to undertake far-reaching structural reforms than a glance at Zimbabwe's early performance might lead one to expect.

There is no shortage of lessons to be learned from the experience of Namibia's neighbours and predecessors in the painful transition process and the literature on Namibia is substantial. Over the twelve years of its existence, the UN Institute for Namibia alone has produced substantial volumes of studies, monographs and reports analysing a variety of policy options for consideration by the incoming Namibian government in its development of Namibia's economy. As a result of South Africa's intransigence, Namibia will be the last African colonial territory to achieve independence. If nothing else, it will have had the greatest opportunity to learn.

Postscript*

The brutal clashes and the unnecessary bloodshed of the first ten days of April which inauspiciously heralded the commencement of the implementation of Resolution 435 are a clear indication of the turbulent times that still await SWAPO on the tortuous road to Namibian independence, and the stupendous task that lies ahead of Namibia in its march towards the final victory.

* This postscript was added after the events in Namibia in early April 1989.

AN INDEPENDENT NAMIBIA?

Despite extensive coverage of the conflict in the international media, the exact circumstances surrounding the clashes which broke out on 1 April 1989 are still far from clear. What seems to have triggered this disturbing conflict, however, is the exclusion of SWAPO—even in an observer capacity—from the series of negotiations leading to the implementation of Namibia's independence process. SWAPO was not even party to the crucial Geneva protocol of August 1988 which dealt extensively with the Angolan situation, the presence of Cuban and South African troops in that country and how they would be removed. While the meeting resolved that Cuban troops would move beyond the thirteenth parallel prior to their departure and SWAPO forces beyond the sixteenth parallel, the issue of SWAPO troops inside Namibia was not mentioned either in the protocol or in the UN Secretary-General's subsequent report on this subject. SWAPO raised this important issue itself, but was not even given the courtesy of a reply. All this put the SWAPO leadership in a state of quandary when the date for the formal start of the Namibian peace process approached. It was the dilemma of the communications gap that created the circumstances leading to the unfortunate clashes.

The bloody conflict has undoubtedly justified the concern expressed in this article about the complete inability of UNTAG to carry out its mandate and guarantee peaceful implementation of R435 in the vast Namibian territory, following the reduction of its number from the 7,500 originally envisaged to 4,650. Secondly the fact that South Africa is poised to use political, administrative and military measures to subvert the election process by engineering and setting off events that could lead to the abrogation of the transition process whilst pretending not to be the culprit. The event has also shown that R435, as opposed to R385, which calls for a complete UN takeover of Namibia and subsequently UN's conduct of elections in the territory by itself, is indeed a compromised resolution.

The April border clashes would seem to have some disturbing consequences. In the first place, it could be argued that the events have damaged the reputation of the SWAPO leadership and consequently confirmed the concern expressed in certain quarters about its inexperience in handling Namibia's complicated situation. This, however, should be judged against the background of SWAPO's total exclusion from Cuban, Angolan and South African negotiations, particularly the crucial Geneva meeting. This exclusion was a mistake. Also, the clashes have reinforced fears for the safety of SWAPO leadership in Namibia during the period of the election campaign. And there is the possibility of SWAPO supporters being nervous about attending rallies. The event, however, is not likely to dent SWAPO's fortunes in the election campaign, particularly as the election day is not until November. And finally, this tragic episode has made both South Africa and SWAPO see the UN force at its weakest and may have lost the UN their respect, even when it gets up to full strength. The trust in UN protection would seem to have been seriously undermined.

The *intifadah* continues: legacy, dynamics and challenges

Since its eruption on 8 December 1987, the sustained popular uprising in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has shaken the status quo and opened new prospects for both peace and conflict in the region. Within its first year the *intifadah* provoked radical shifts in policy by most principal actors. Jordan severed its administrative and financial ties with the Occupied Territories (OT) on 31 July 1988, all but ending a forty-year association. On 15 November 1988 the Palestine National Council (the PLO parliament-in-exile) declared an independent State of Palestine. It also affirmed its acceptance of UN resolutions 181, 242 and 338 as the basis for peace talks and of a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A month later, PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, recognised Israel's right to exist in peace and security during his address to the UN General Assembly and at a subsequent press conference. And the USA consequently initiated a substantive dialogue with the PLO.

The Palestinians have undeniably come a long way towards achieving their goal of self-determination, in the form of an independent state. The role of the *intifadah* is equally evident, whether in transforming international opinion or in providing the PLO with both the incentive and the opportunity to undertake a basic shift in declared strategy.¹ This article studies the features that have made the Palestinian uprising so remarkable, with a review of its historical legacy, its impact, and the challenges facing its future development.

Historical legacy of the *intifadah*

A review of the historical legacy of Palestinian national resistance is crucial not only because it has contributed practical experience and psychological preparation to the *intifadah*, but also because it treats the Palestinians as active participants able to affect their destiny, rather than as the passive victims of policies dictated by others. Stressing

¹ For a discussion of the shift in Palestinian thinking and the reasons behind it see Yezid Sayigh, 'Struggle within, struggle without: the transformation of PLO politics since 1982', *International Affairs* (London) 65 (2) spring 1989

continuity with past traditions of resistance is particularly important in view of recurrent commentary in Western media that portrays the *intifadah* as both unprecedented and owing nothing to the past experience of armed struggle.²

Armed struggle

Reflecting the sense of historical continuity, the first appeal issued by the National Unified Command (NUC) of the *intifadah* addressed itself to 'the people of martyrs, grandchildren of Qassam, people of the uprising that has sprouted from the roots of the homeland since 1936'. 'Izzedin al-Qassam was a Muslim preacher who attempted to organise a mass-based armed rebellion against the British mandate in 1935, and 1936 was the starting date of the three-year long 'Great Revolt' in Palestine. The latter commenced with a six-month general strike—one of the longest in modern world history. At their peak, nationalist guerrillas held control over sizeable areas thanks to popular support in the towns and self-mobilisation in the villages. British might eventually prevailed, but only after some 50,000 Palestinians (out of one million) had been detained, of whom 2,000 were given life sentences and 146 hanged, and 5,000 homes had been demolished in reprisal.³

The memory of the Great Revolt was to be invoked thirty years later when the contemporary Palestinian guerrilla movement—soon to take over the PLO—sought to respond to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in the weeks immediately following the 1967 war. Asserting that 'the Palestinian revolutionary tradition is best represented in the 1936 revolt', the guerrillas attempted to emulate it by organising a widespread insurrection that would drive the Israeli army out of the newly-occupied territories.⁴ Over 1,000 men—among whom were Arafat and many other members of the current Palestinian leadership—entered the West bank secretly, to form mobile guerrilla bands and civilian support networks and to mobilise a campaign of civil disobedience. Flaws in conception and poor security defeated this strategy in the West Bank by the year's end.

However, the situation in Gaza was very different. The Strip was

² Continuity is stressed by Arab analysts, as in N al-'Abbasi, 'Al-Intifadah al-Filistiniyyah ar-rahinah: ru'yah tarikhiiyyah' (The current Palestinian uprising: a historical view), and 'Abdul-Mu'ti 'Assaf, 'Ar-ru'ya al-istratijiyyah wa kifah ash-sha'b al-Filistini' (The strategic view and the Palestinian people's struggle, 1917-1988), *Shu'un 'Arabiyyah* (Tunis), 56, December 1988.

³ Y Ruday'i, *Thawrat 1936 fi Filistin: dirasah 'askariyyah* (The 1936 Revolt in Palestine: a military study), Beirut: Institute for Arab Studies, 1983, p 93.

⁴ Fatch, *Ath-Thawruh al-Filistiniyyah: ah'aduha wa qadayaha* (The Palestinian Revolution: its dimensions and issues), Kuwait: Dar al-qabas, p 29.

under Egyptian administration in 1948–67, and with the advent of Nasser in 1952 some Palestinian groups were allowed to operate politically. After the founding of the PLO in 1964, the Egyptians helped form its military arm, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), which trained and partially armed some 30,000 men. Thus, despite the collapse of the PLA in the Six-Day War, there was a large pool of military manpower and considerable arms caches, which fuelled an active insurgency for the next four years despite Gaza's geographical isolation. Due to the extreme crowding of the Strip, there was no lack of sea for the fish to swim in and the guerrillas could operate a shadow authority that even ran its own courts. It took a massive operation accompanied by the demolition of nearly 14,000 houses, the relocation of 25,000 civilians and the uprooting of hundreds of citrus groves before the Israeli army could gain control in 1971. (Also part of the Palestinian heritage are the uprisings that erupted in the refugee camps of Jordan and Lebanon in 1968–69, to wrest control for the PLO from heavy-handed government security agencies.)

Important as the above guerrilla campaigns were, the real repository of experience in the or after 1971 was military action by clandestine networks. The latter were locally-based, but received supplies and directions from the various guerrilla groups based in exile that comprised the PLO.⁵ In the unceasing tug-of-war that developed with the Israeli security services, hundreds of cells were discovered and thousands of Palestinians sent to jail; the prison population has averaged at 2,500–4,500, with an estimated 43,000 residents of Gaza alone serving varying sentences in 1967–86. Interrogation or arrest has affected 250,000 persons (one in six inhabitants, or one in every three over the age of fifteen) in the same period, with over 40 per cent of all adult males undergoing overnight detention.⁶ Although successful in containing the level of organised violence—Palestinian operations settled at an average of 300 a year for most of the 1970s—Israeli counter-resistance strategy led paradoxically to several adverse results. Its very comprehensiveness maximised points of contact (and friction) with the Palestinians and familiarised them with the enemy's methods. By the

⁵ Since 1968, the PLO has been an umbrella formation with the nominal membership of eight guerrilla factions, recently joined by the communists and Islamic movement.

⁶ *Shu'un al-Ard al-Muhtallah (Affairs of the Occupied Homeland)*, Amman: Ministry for the Occupied Homeland, 1986; *Ad-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah: haqa'iq wa arqam (The West Bank: facts and figures)*, Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1985; and G. Aronson, *Creating Facts: Israel, Palestinians and the West Bank*, Washington DC: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987, p. 23.

same token, the Palestinians gradually lost their fear and Israeli deterrence weakened.

Another unpredicted result was the unwitting role of Israeli prisons in producing thousands of seasoned activists. Responding to overcrowding, squalid conditions, and physical and mental abuse, Palestinian prisoners formed highly-organised networks that effectively led the prison population from within. Secretly-elected committees managed relations between political factions, staged hunger strikes, and broadcast appeals. The prisoners also ran an extensive educational system. This involved classes in national politics and history, debates on current affairs, literacy programmes and ordinary schooling. Former students or professionals gave coaching in specialised subjects, and many prisoners were thus able to receive high school and university degrees while serving their sentences. In parallel was an intensive programme of instruction in the fundamentals of political organisation in all its dimensions, that moreover encouraged free and critical discussion. As detainees ended their terms or were released in Israeli-PLO prisoner exchanges (over 1,000 in December 1983, for instance), Israeli prisons won the ironic title of 'cadre schools'.⁷

A final, additional spur to activism in the OT was the battles waged in the Palestinian diaspora in the 1980s. The PLO's ability to withstand the Israeli siege of Beirut for seventy days in the summer of 1982 impressed the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while their anger was fuelled by the Israeli role in the massacres subsequently perpetrated in the Sabra/Shatila refugee camp. Similarly, the desperate defence of the refugee camps in Lebanon during the three-year 'camps war' waged against them by the Shi'ite Amal militia evoked both pride and bitterness in the Territories. Reflecting these feelings and responding instinctively to the plight of the diaspora, and after a short period of decline following the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, the number of Palestinian military operations launched within the OT rose from 180 in 1982 to 351 the following year, and then steadily upwards to 870 in 1986. Noticeably, a growing proportion of attacks were carried out by individuals or cells acting on their own initiative, and involved such rudimentary weapons as knives and molotov cocktails. Reflecting the mass character of military resistance was the number of sentences passed on Palestinians by Israeli military courts for various security offences: 7,457 in 1985-87.

⁷ The reputation of these 'cadre schools' is so impressive that some activists are said to have deliberately exposed themselves to jail in order to gain the experience. Interview with Palestinian activists from the OT, London, November 1988.

The non-military experience

Parallel to the growth of locally-initiated and self-organised military action in the 1980s was the constant rise in non-military forms of protest and confrontation. After the failure of a disorganised protest campaign in 1967–68, Palestinian civilian activism only became widespread from the mid-1970s onwards, as the permanence of Israeli occupation became increasingly evident. Strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations marked special occasions, and clashes with Israeli troops became common in the late 1970s as Palestinians protested against the Camp David accords and Israeli autonomy plans. Israeli attempts to impose a 'civil administration', depose local mayors and construct new settlements finally triggered a three-month uprising in spring 1982, in which 28 Palestinians were shot dead, 500 wounded, and 1,000 detained. From that time, both the scale and the intensity of protests grew sharply, especially as the OT felt the need to compensate for the predicament of the PLO that was suffering first a Syrian-sponsored split and then the 'camps war'. In 1985, for example, there were 933 instances of protest ('illegal acts' in Israeli parlance), followed by 1,358 in 1986 and 2,982 in 1987.⁸ Demonstrations increasingly became occasions for confrontation with the army, during which protestors threw stones and empty bottles. In those three years Israeli troops killed 103 Palestinians, wounded 668 and detained 13,249.

Non-military resistance necessarily involved far more than protest action, especially if the Palestinians were to gain active influence on the course of events. The shift from passivity to self-assertion was embodied in a general movement towards building autonomous institutions, consolidating national identity and responding to the population's existential needs. For example, five universities were established in 1973–80 in the OT, where there previously had been none. Polytechnics, technical colleges and vocational schools also multiplied. Newspapers, libraries and research departments rapidly increased in number and activity. Meanwhile, municipalities sought to decrease their dependence on the military government and to provide certain services independently, though this effort was only partially successful due to Israeli control over financial transfers and municipal appointments.⁹

⁸ Detailed statistics and breakdown in 'Abdul-Fattah Al-Jayyousi (ed), *Filistin al-Muhtallah: as-samud wa al-tahaddi* (Occupied Palestine 1985–87: steadfastness and challenge), Amman: Dar al-Karmel, 1988, chapter one.

⁹ Besides aid from US relief agencies and other foreign bodies, the PLO-Jordanian Joint Committee funnelled some \$150 million annually into the OT after 1978 to support local industry, agriculture, infrastructure, health and education.

Of lasting impact too was the proliferation of social organisations—unions, clubs, associations, cultural centres—which started in the late 1970s. Ironically, Israeli successes in limiting military action played a part in promoting PLO awareness of the need to develop social and political action in the OT. This was an approach long advocated by the Palestinian Communist Party, but it was only in the second half of the 1970s that the main guerrilla factions—Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)—adopted it too. Their newfound interest coincided with the maturation of long-term processes set in motion by Israeli economic and social policies, with the result that new or revitalised social associations in the OT grew rapidly in number and membership. And, as with the street demonstrations, it was the political challenge posed by Israeli attempts to impose its own version of autonomy on the Palestinians in 1979–80 that stimulated counter mobilisation. The PLO had learnt anew the lesson that ‘the translation of potential politicization into political action is dependent on the availability of mobilization agents’—leaders and organisations—and was not an automatic or inevitable result of appropriate social conditions.¹⁰

Mobilisation in the OT took several, often overlapping forms. One was the role of charities and self-help or community development associations, concerned with providing income-generating projects or other forms of material assistance.¹¹ Most of these were basically formal institutions in that they had to obtain official licenses to exist. Also included in this category are cooperatives, though many had an informal structure. Among the formal associations are trade and labour unions, of which thirty-eight are registered with the authorities at present and sixty are illegal.¹² Many unions had been cowed into inactivity in the 1970s by the arrest or deportation of officials, or by the closure of offices and banning of elections, but, reflecting the general

¹⁰ A Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: struggle for the soul of Lebanon*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1987, pp. 34–5.

¹¹ A review appears in Amin al-Khatib, ‘Social work and charitable societies’, in E. Nakhleh (ed.), *A Palestinian Agenda for the West Bank and Gaza*, Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1980. Also see E. Kuttab, ‘Community development under occupation: an alternative strategy’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* (Oxford) 2 (1) 1989.

¹² On their conditions, see ‘An-naqabat al-‘ummaliyyah al-Filistiniyyah taht al-ihlial’ (Palestinian labour unions under occupation), *Sanied al-Iqtisadi* 11 (75) January–March 1989. Due to their revitalisation, twenty-five legal unions in the West Bank alone had 40,000 members by 1983. J. Richardson, *The West Bank: a portrait*, Washington DC: Middle East Institute, 1984, p. 137. A major study of the unions and the mass movement in the OT is J. Hiltermann, *Before the Uprising: The organisation and mobilisation of Palestinian workers and women in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip*, PhD thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1988.

growth in militancy, most started to hold elections in defiance of the Israeli authorities from 1980 onwards.¹³

The mass movement

The major change in the picture, though, was the emergence of a new and dynamic mass movement. This was not a single body, but a widespread phenomenon actively encouraged by the need to circumvent Israeli restrictions on the unions, and at the same time to respond to specific local and national needs. The mass movement was characterised by its voluntary, grassroots nature that attracted youthful recruits and encouraged new ideas, and by the formation of a large number of loosely-knit committees. By avoiding explicitly political programmes and eschewing violence, the latter enjoyed a quasi-legal status despite harassment by the military authorities.

One category of popular committees was those established to serve specific purposes, such as medical and agricultural assistance. The Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees first formed in 1979, for example, now includes 800 medical personnel of whom 360 are physicians, or one-third of all physicians in the OT.¹⁴ A second type was 'action' committees, bodies geared to mobilising specific sectors of the population such as women, or to undertaking specific tasks such as sanitation drives. Women's committees in particular have proliferated widely, driven by political competition between Palestinian factions and aided by the initial lack of Palestinian concern.¹⁵

Last but not least, the third branch of the mass movement was the student committees.¹⁶ Initially formed in the universities by the competing political factions, they spread increasingly among high school students in the early 1980s as well. Having been in the forefront of the protest movement for a decade, students became active in community programmes and self-help schemes, and helped establish numerous action committees. Most crucially, due to the pattern of rural urbanisation and mobility, universities brought townsfolk, villagers, and camp dwellers together, and so contributed directly to the massive politicisation of a Palestinian countryside known for its passivity and con-

¹³ M Barghouti, 'Popular movements in the community', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2 (1) 1989, pp 11-12. The experience of one union in Gaza is described in P Cossali, 'Gaza's unions grasp the nettle', *Middle East International* 308, 12 September 1987.

¹⁴ J Odeh, 'Health and occupation', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2 (1) 1989, p 5.

¹⁵ J Hilterman, 'Organising under occupation', *Middle East International* 296, 20 March 1987.

¹⁶ See discussion in E Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership: West Bank politics since 1967*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1988.

servatism. Naturally, this development was fuelled by proletarianisation of the peasantry under the impact of Israeli economic policy. What started as student committees in the late 1970s and early 1980s soon developed therefore into the backbone of a mass movement based in virtually every city, village and refugee camp in the OT. And once again Israeli policy had aided this evolution: 'graduates' from the prison system, many of whom had since joined the universities, formed the experienced cadres of the mass movement. To take one example, the largest of the student committees, *Harakat ash-Shahibah* (the Fatch-affiliated Youth Movement), could boast the ability to launch demonstrations virtually at will throughout the OT by 1987.

Dynamics of the *intifadah*

National struggle is an incremental process. Much as Israeli policy inside the Occupied Territories and Arab policy towards the PLO and diaspora Palestinians had contributed the objective conditions for revolt, it is the experiences and sentiments accumulated during armed struggle and civilian resistance over the years that have imbued the *intifadah* since late 1987 with such stamina. It is to the outstanding features of the uprising that this article now turns.

Unanimity and staying power

More than anything, what has given the *intifadah* its dramatic impact on international opinion and on the local balance of power has been its remarkable unanimity and staying power. Palestinians of every age, sex, place of residence and social background have participated in one facet or another of the uprising.

The youthfulness of protestors has often been noted, yet the *élan* of teenagers and even children should not obscure the vital role of their elder brothers and sisters in directing confrontations and organising other activities.¹⁷ Taken in overview, Palestinian youth virtually run the uprising, which is not surprising considering that 70 per cent of the entire population is under thirty years of age (and 45-50 per cent under fifteen). This whole demographic sector has grown up knowing little but occupation, creating intense resentment unfettered by fear or awe of the 'invincible' Israeli army. The extensive involvement of women in particular must also be noted, reflected in the fact that they accounted

¹⁷ On the role of youth see D Kuttub, 'A profile of the stonethrowers', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17 (3) spring 1988.

for 20–25 per cent of all casualties incurred in the first ten months of the *intifadah*.¹⁸ And although schoolchildren have been prominent in street action, another notable feature is the frequency with which parents have joined in, in contrast to their past abstention from protest demonstrations. Yet the most important contribution of the older generations (essentially adults over forty) has been their backup role—supplying demonstrators with stones, food and water—and their participation in the various action committees involved in the community work essential to providing *muqawwimāt as-sumūd* ('the requirements of steadfastness').

Unanimity has also extended to all crucial social groupings. The mass demonstrations that erupted in the refugee camps of Gaza and then of the West Bank in December 1987 soon spread to the main towns and cities. Meanwhile, the uprising spread to the Palestinian villages: from 20 in revolt in December, the number rose to 86 in January 1988, 200 in February, and 232 in March; rural residents accounted for 43 per cent of the Palestinian dead in the same period. Since then the whole countryside has become involved, with dozens of villages declaring themselves 'liberated zones'. Once again the consequences of Israeli policy have come home to roost. Rural participation has given the *intifadah* added staying power due to the ability of local communities to achieve a modicum of food self-sufficiency. Seeking to reimpose its authority, the Israeli army has repeatedly 're-occupied' the villages—twenty times in some cases. Massive security sweeps such as the one affecting 110 villages on 7–8 November 1988 are regular features. Thus the spread of the uprising has compelled the army both to disperse its forces and to call up major numbers of reservists: the number of men policing the OT had jumped from the original 5,000 to 70,000 by the end of 1988.¹⁹

In the towns and cities, the positive attitude of the middle class—merchants, professionals and small industrialists—has had a special impact on the evolution of the *intifadah*. Years of distorted development and unequal trade with Israel have pushed the bulk of this social category (whose stance is central to the success of every modern revolution) towards active opposition. Christian towns and neighbourhoods such

¹⁸ Based on detailed statistics. F. Sarah, 'Al-bunyah al-ijtima'iyyah lil-intifadah al-Filistiniyyah' (The social composition of the Palestinian uprising), *Shu'un Filistiniyyah* 189, December 1988, p. 10; and S. Khalil, 'Dirasah tahliliyyah lil-isabat khilal ash-shuhur al-'ashrah al-ula lil-intifadah' (An analytical study of casualties in the first ten months of the uprising), *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 11 (75), January–March 1989, p. 167.

¹⁹ *The Observer* (London), 11 December 1988.

as Beit Sahur, Beit Jala, Bethlehem and East Jerusalem are a good example: affluent and normally apolitical, they have become leading centres of the uprising. Within the middle class, the merchants in particular have played a major role, whether by adhering to strike calls and opening hours set by the National Unified Command (NUC), boycotting Israeli products, or refraining from hoarding and racketeering. Stung by Israeli taxes and controls, many professionals—doctors, lawyers and engineers—have contributed by reducing or cancelling client fees, offering free advice to the community, and joining the relevant action committees. Commercial and industrial employers have responded with donations, increased production and the commitment to retain workers at normal salaries regardless of market conditions. Indeed many have taken on extra workers as a form of support. Only parasitical elements—real estate and labour agents supplying Israeli customers, and major importers of Israeli goods—have abstained from the uprising.²⁰

Viewed in conjunction with the special features of the *intifadah*—grassroots action, self-reliance, communal solidarity—this unanimity reflects no less than a social revolution within Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Effective leadership

Unanimity of nationalist feeling and social consensus are not in themselves sufficient to guarantee continuation, let alone success. The *intifadah* would have soon collapsed or fallen prey to internal divisions, in the way of recent uprisings in other countries, were it not for several features. The first of these is the existence of effective leadership.

Since mid-January 1988, leadership of the *intifadah* has been exercised by the NUC. For the first time since the outlawing of the National Guidance Council by Israel in 1982, the OT have had a single identifiable leading body. However, unlike the Council which consisted of familiar public figures drawing their authority from political and social status, the NUC is a clandestine formation of unknown composition. If anything, its members appear to be relatively youthful and educated and drawn widely from lower and middle social strata, with a significant number of professionals and self-employed persons. Given high rural

²⁰ There is broad unanimity among Palestinian commentators on the positive role of the national bourgeoisie, though one writer is more sceptical: K 'Ayed, *Al-Intifadah ath-Thawriyyah fi Filistin* (*The Revolutionary Uprising in Palestine*), Amman: Dar ash-Shurouq, 1988.

and educational mobility, this represents a broad cross-section of society within the Occupied Territories.

Politically, the NUC is composed of representatives of the only four PLO member-groups that have a mass following within the OT—Fateh, the Patriotic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestine Communist Party (PCP)—together with a number of ‘independents’. It also liaises closely with other local forces such as Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas (which may by now be permanently represented within the command). Though at times still fragile, this broad national unity has been a central *sine qua non* for the success of the uprising. Achieving it is a mark of the maturity of the leading cadres of the groups concerned, after years of factionalism. The importance of maintaining a common front thus overrode a brief divergence between the NUC and the PFLP in the early months of the uprising and the more fundamental feud between the PLO groups and the Islamic ones. The reconciliation effected between the latter in November 1988 has since been translated into palpable cooperation ‘on the ground’ and a growing Fateh-Islamic alliance.²¹

Again unlike the National Guidance Council, the NUC is not in fact a single body at all, but a highly-decentralised network of leadership committees. This ensures that Israeli security services can neither decapitate the uprising in one blow nor paralyse it by isolating specific cities or areas: the Israelis have announced the capture of the NUC six times, and its members may in fact have passed through detention many more times undetected. Rather, the NUC acts as an amorphous body in which each segment simply operates autonomously under its own local committee when necessary. Yet there appears to be a supreme leadership that regularly issues the appeals that have become a hallmark of the *intifadah*. These statements contain political guidelines, practical instructions, and action agendas for two-week periods, which are then applied by branch NUC committees according to local circumstances.

Loose organisational structure has not precluded tight coordination, therefore. Even under siege conditions and despite extraordinary Israeli measures (roadblocks, travel bans, administrative arrests and phone tapping), the various NUC committees have managed to liaise and coordinate positions. How this is done is unclear, though one element seems to be that the senior leaders are not concentrated in one

²¹ According to the PLO's central organ, *Filistin ath-Thawrah* (Nicosia) 740 (17th year), 12 March 1989.

location. By the same token, the supreme NUC may not be the same one on every occasion, indicating a high degree of democracy and mutual confidence within the top echelon generally. Given this style of operation, it is quite possible that former prisoners are key figures in the NUC structure, as they are experienced in operating freely under restricted conditions.

In any case, membership in any one committee is not permanent, with new members stepping in to replace persons under arrest or unable to attend. Besides making the task of Israeli security services more difficult, this amorphousness suggests two further conclusions: that there is a large pool of leading cadres who enjoy the confidence of their followers, and that there is an extensive and disciplined organisation in place that can accommodate such flexibility without suffering constant security leaks. Also reinforcing security, as well as raising efficiency, is the division of functions within the NUC. This is moreover replicated in the deliberate redundancy of local command structures such as NUC branches, unions, relief and community committees, action and youth committees, any of which can take over when needed.

Political aims

Thanks to the existence of a competent leadership, a second feature of the *intifadah* has been the clarity, realism and gradation of objectives. The uprising has moreover preserved a high degree of political unity (especially following the NUC-Islamic reconciliation) despite a long history of factional disputes. (Political and family feuds were a major factor in the collapse of the 1936-39 revolt.)

The NUC has stated Palestinian demands clearly giving the population tangible goals to strive for. Principally these can be summarised as follows: Israeli military withdrawal from Palestinian population centres and the introduction of UN peace-keepers; the lifting of martial law and erasure of the results of repression by releasing prisoners, the re-admission of deportees, and the offer of compensation for the deaths and injuries inflicted; the permission of free local elections and permission for the 186 local members of the Palestine National Council to attend its sessions abroad (they have been banned from doing so since 1967); cancellation of economic constraints on Palestinian development; and cessation of settlement activity.²² Politically, the *intifadah*'s leadership within the OT has confirmed the PLO as sole legitimate Palestinian

²² Based on the fourteen-point manifesto issued on 14 January 1988. Reproduced in *Filistin ath-Thawarah* 683 (16th year), 21 January 1988.

representative and only valid interlocutor. The ultimate goal is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, to be arrived at through negotiation in the context of an international peace conference attended by Israel and the PLO on equal footing.²³

Practical objectives

In order to achieve its immediate objectives and contribute to the broader political aims enunciated, the NUC has addressed itself to a number of immediate tasks. Its instructions have been issued under the heading of 'appeals', a term suggesting an egalitarian invitation to action, rather than the aloof title of 'manifestos' used in the past by other leaderships.²⁴ The usual form in every appeal is to comment first on the latest political developments and to state the NUC's stand. Practical tasks and urgent missions are cited next as guidelines for action by the popular committees and relevant community associations, followed by general exhortations to the public. Finally, each appeal assigns a schedule for strikes and 'mass actions' designed to commemorate specific incidents and anniversaries, or to protest and combat particular Israeli policies.

The NUC's instructions have focused on several main tasks. One is the expression of protest and opposition to Israeli occupation by means of demonstrations, deliberate confrontations, strikes and visits to detainees. The stress here lies on exerting maximal pressure on the Israelis through contacts that are multiple, daily, and have a mass nature. Even when large marches are not called for, small groups of stonethrowers maintain the pressure. Constant action is also seen as important to boost popular morale and solidarity, and to preserve the uprising's momentum. Reflecting the scale of protest, there were 13,750 instances of protest in the first nine months of the uprising according to official Israeli figures, though an Israeli military administrator later set the total to the end of 1988 at 23,092.²⁵ And despite the harsh security

²³ Comments here and below are based on the texts of the series of public statements issued by the NUC, reproduced in *Filistin ath-Thawrah* and on the analysis in 'Qira'ah Tahliliyyah fi bayanat munaththamat at-tahrir al-Filistiniyyah al-qiyyadah al-muwahhadah lil-intifadah' (An analytical reading of the communiqués of the PLO national unified command of the uprising), *As-Sadaqah* (Tunis) 2 (5) 1988.

²⁴ This distinction is noted by N Aruri, 'A new climate of opportunity for Palestinians', *Middle East International* 339, 21 December 1988.

²⁵ The official Israeli news agency, cited in *Al-Hurriyyah* (Nicosia), 14 August 1988; *International Herald Tribune*, 1 September 1988; and chronologies of events in *Filistin ath-Thawrah*. One Israeli Foreign Ministry official and reserve officer stated that the authorities only reported 10-15 per cent of all incidents to the public. *As-Safir* (Beirut), 12 July 1988. Higher figure from General Aryeh Shiloah, quoted in *Al-Hayat* (London), 22 February 1989.

crackdown, the rhythm of clashes has since remained constant, at between twenty and thirty per day, while the various strikes and boycotts have hardened into permanency.

A second major task is to dismantle the many-tentacled structure of occupation. One of the primary targets of the NUC has been the Israeli revenue system, with constant appeals to the Palestinian population to refrain from paying any type of tax, VAT, excise, duty, or administrative fee to the Israeli military government. Within four months of the start of the *intifadah*, total tax revenue for the fiscal year ending in April 1988 had dropped by 40 per cent.²⁶ Reacting to this loss, Israeli treasury officials have broken into homes and businesses under heavy army escort to collect taxes by force, during which several Palestinians have been shot. The military government has also resorted to withholding licences and permits, withdrawing identity cards (placing people under effective house arrest), banning specific individuals (marked by special identity cards) from working in Israel, and imposing a range of fines for every conceivable offence as a source of income. Yet by July 1988 a further drop in tax revenue of 50 per cent was already being projected for the fiscal year 1988/89.

A boycott of Israeli goods has also been in progress in the OT since January 1988, reducing the value of imports from Israel to roughly half the 1987 level of \$1 billion.²⁷ The main target has been items that the Palestinians can already produce, thus doubling the effect by encouraging local industry and agriculture. In parallel, the NUC has called on Palestinian workers to boycott employment in Israel or Israeli settlements in the Territories. Adherence to these appeals has reached 100 per cent on special occasions, with up to 50 per cent absence on a regular basis. Ironically, the Israeli army practices of sealing off entire areas with hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, or delaying traffic to aggravate Palestinians, has increased absenteeism. Deprived of its manual labour, the Israeli construction sector alone reported a loss of \$200 million in the first nine months of the uprising.²⁸

In assigning these tasks, the NUC has shown itself to be keenly aware of the difficulties involved, especially the population's actual ability to implement them and absorb the consequences. From the start, therefore, the NUC adopted a gradual approach designed to habituate people

²⁶ According to Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhaq Rabin. *As-Safir*, 21 July 1988.

²⁷ *Middle East International* 342, 20 January 1989.

²⁸ *Filistin ath-Thawrah* 717 (17th year), 18 September 1988

and prepare them for each successive stage. Its calls to boycott Israeli goods and (especially) employment in Israel were initially selective, as were the types of tax to be withheld, until the momentum had built up sufficiently to allow blanket embargoes. The NUC also avoided the errors of the 1936 general strike by avoiding continuous closures for more than three days at a time. Instead, shops were set a limited daily timetable for opening. While preserving a necessary level of income for all, this compromise offered a double advantage: by reducing local consumption, it slashed imports from Israel and stimulated Palestinian savings.

Gradual buildup was similarly displayed in the call for petty informers and collaborators to stop working for the Israeli military government. Conscious that many of them had been coerced into service and reluctant to provoke inter-family divisions, the NUC avoided premature pressure, and it was only at the end of March 1988, after a slow buildup, that Appeal No 11 assigned a 'day of atonement' for all informers to confess their activities publicly. Hundreds complied with the call, and returned their weapons to the authorities. Since then a dozen recalcitrant informers have been killed, while others have left their homes to avoid public wrath.²⁹

Gradualism was most apparent in the approach adopted towards the 21,000 Palestinian employees of the Israeli civil administration. Severing links is one of the most important symbolic and practical elements in disengaging local society from the occupation, but it is also one of the most difficult. Three months passed before Appeal No 10 (10 March 1988) called on any civil servants to resign their posts, stressing even then that this concerned policemen and tax collectors only. Within weeks some two-thirds of the 1,000 Arab policemen in the OT had returned their weapons and uniforms. The turn of municipal and village councils came next, with many resigning en masse. The list extended very gradually, and a full year later Appeal No 35 (26 February 1989) was still naming new categories for disengagement (registry officials in this case), but not school or medical personnel. Once again Israeli actions helped, as the authorities warned in June 1988 that revenue losses would compel them to dismiss 25 per cent of their Palestinian employees. The decision by Jordan a month later to cut financial subsidies

²⁹ In some cases informers were denounced by their own families or lynched by angry crowds of neighbours they had fired on. This was the fate of a collaborator in Qabatya on 24 February 1988, for example: Qabatya has suffered 11 killed, 150 wounded and 590 detained by the Israeli forces so far.

to their former civil servants further reduced their incentives for retaining their posts, especially as the PLO immediately offered compensatory pay.³⁰

Dismantling the occupation demanded the creation of alternatives, as well as the ability to cope with the needs of the population and of former civil servants and commuting workers. At the core of the emerging system lay the theme of social solidarity or *takaful* (mutual welfare). The NUC's first move was to call for donations and other material help for the refugee camps and for striking workers, as early as January 1988. As the need for broader measures became apparent, it asked the population to reduce consumption to the bare minimum, while urging farmers and industrialists to produce more locally. In return, shopkeepers were asked to sell Palestinian products only (unless no substitute for needed Israeli goods was available), and to refrain from raising prices. The public was similarly expected to shun boycott-breakers and profiteers, and to provide the shopkeepers with both custom and protection. Employers were requested not to reduce pay or dismiss workers. Indeed they were urged to hire workers boycotting Israeli employment and former civil servants.

Ultimately the key to achieving a modicum of self-reliance has been successful mass mobilisation. Only if a major part of the population adheres to commercial boycotts can they be effective, while mass response is essential to the survival and even expansion of Palestinian agriculture and industry. More crucially, the NUC has worked to encourage self-reliant thinking and practical self-sufficiency in the population at large. Farmers have been requested to reclaim and cultivate more land, while townspeople have been advised to grow vegetables in their private yards. On designated days, moreover, people respond to appeals by flocking to assist in harvesting crops, replanting uprooted orchards, repairing roads and terraces, and rebuilding homes demolished by the army. Social solidarity and civic responsibility are in fact two of the uprising's most notable achievements. Palestinians have also been urged constantly to stock basic supplies in order to outlast the frequent curfews and sieges, and to develop the domestic economy by baking bread in their homes. With a small cottage industry emerging and farmers selling their produce

³⁰ The PLO's historic decision to take full administrative and financial responsibility for the entire civil service, fiercely contested by Israel, was made by Arafat on 22 August 1988. Text in *Filistin ath-Thawrah* 715 (17th year), 4 September 1988.

directly from the fields, the population is slowly circumventing the Israeli system altogether.³¹

To reinforce and perpetuate these trends, the NUC has urged the formation of alternative institutions. One of the more ambitious projects is to establish an autonomous Palestinian education system. An early effort was made to counter the Israeli closure of schools and salvage the academic future of hundreds of thousands of young people by organising clandestine classes in private homes. But the ease with which troops could intercept children carrying textbooks or break into houses defeated this initiative in the main, and demonstrated the difficulties of shifting from subsistence modes into institutional development. Yet the Palestinian response has been to develop more careful and comprehensive development strategies in all fields (involving a full review of school curricula for example) in anticipation of more favourable circumstances.³² Meanwhile, the NUC has sought interim measures such as the setting up of 'family mutual benefit funds' in the camps and villages.

Structure of the *intifadah*

The policy of institution-building is carried through into the structure of the uprising, that is, the network of committees and other bodies that actually implement policy on the ground. These were already in existence prior to the *intifadah*, but grew rapidly in size, diversity and function once it had started.³³ Besides confronting the Israelis, the grassroots organisations play a central role in mobilising the population and bringing its resources to bear, thus providing social and economic alternatives to the occupation.

There is much overlap between the different types of mass organisations in terms of membership and function, but distinctions exist. The principal arm of the *intifadah* is the immense number of youth and action committees spread throughout every part of the OT. Each political faction has its own committees, but Fateh's *shahibah* is by far the largest with an estimated 40,000 members.³⁴ Despite their political

³¹ Described in D Kuttah, 'The Palestinian uprising: the second phase, self-sufficiency', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17 (4), summer 1988.

³² On this aspect, see J Kuttah, 'The children's revolt', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17 (4), summer 1988.

³³ See, for example, J Gabriel, 'The economic side of the *intifadah*', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18 (1), autumn 1988; S A Khattab, 'Asalib al-muqawamah ash-sha'biyyah al-Filistiniyyah fil-intifadah' [Methods of popular Palestinian resistance in the uprising], *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 11 (75), January-March 1989.

³⁴ According to a NUC member deported by Israel on 1 August 1988, interviewed in *Filistin ath-Thawrah* 728 (17th year), 11 December 1988.

leanings, however, the various groupings have an open membership, which is built around an inner core of committed cadres. The backbone is once again largely provided by former prisoners and detainees. The youth and action committees are generally organised according to geographical location such as village, camp or city neighbourhood, and to social affiliation—women, students, professions. With the evolution of the uprising, though, the committees have evolved to cope with specific tasks. Thus neighbourhood watches composed both of youths and local residents replaced the policemen when the latter resigned. Other committees have seen to the distribution of food and basic supplies, or mobilised harvest and donation drives. In many areas the action committees are formed jointly by local members of the various political factions, whereas in others cooperation has not developed so far for various reasons and each group maintains its own bodies (while coordinating with its counterparts).

The need to provide basic existential needs has activated sections of the adult population not known for their activism, and has led to an extension of the committee system into their midst. This is evident in the participation of mothers and housewives in preparing and distributing food and in collecting stones and building barricades. Indeed the role of women is one of the most striking social changes introduced, or rather reflected, by the *intifadah*.³⁵ Another novel development is the formation of numerous shopkeepers' committees that help supervise the strike and commercial activity as well as coordinate protection with the youth committees. Adult participation is, of course, also vital to the action of specialised bodies such as the agricultural relief committees, that offer technical advice, tools and seedlings to the public. Aware of their importance, the NUC at an early stage called on all professionals to organise themselves into such unions. Building on their response, the NUC has since encouraged the population to develop cooperatives as a means for increasing self-reliance.

Determining as such activity may be for the long-term survival of the *intifadah*, the decisive factor that first disrupted the Israeli control system and then made mass transformation possible has been the part played by the young stone-throwers. During the first year, the uprising's foot-soldiers operated in 'Strike Forces' branching off from the youth and action committees. These quickly developed street-fighting tactics and

³⁵ Due to labour migration, there were 13·20 per cent more women in the 07 than men in the 24-44 year age category in 1981. M Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Project: a survey of Israel's policies*, Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1984, p 5.

a semi-permanent structure, in which youths of between twenty and thirty years of age provided direction. Prior to the uprising, the youth committees had neutralised dozens of petty informers by compelling them to change residence or cease collaboration—closing the ‘eyes and ears’ of the Israeli security services and so contributing to their surprise—and later took punitive action against those who had not heeded the NUC call to desist.

Reflecting their growing confidence, the Strike Forces have mounted public parades in dozens of villages and cities, in which 50–500 masked youths at a time have taken part, wielding sticks and axes and wearing standard uniforms (track suits or even fatigues). A sign of internal and public discipline, and of the paralysis of Israeli informers, is that Israeli forces have not had advance warning of a single parade, although all have been attended by large crowds of local inhabitants. The resistance put up by the Strike Forces has often deterred Israeli intervention, allowing them to establish effective, albeit temporary, ‘liberated zones’. Thus the *cashah* of Nablus, a city with a population of 110,000, has offered a safe haven for the local NUC branch and is virtually off-bounds for Israeli soldiers, who are constrained to view Palestinian parades there from a distance.³⁶ Finally, as part of the construction of the institutions of a state, the Strike Forces were renamed the ‘Popular Army’ on 1 January 1989, the 24th anniversary of the launching of the Palestinian armed struggle by Fateh, on which occasion the Israeli army sealed off the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip.³⁷

Special features

The intense dynamism of the *intifadah* has manifested itself in many ways at every level. In particular is the strong sense of solidarity among the population, based on political unity and an equally strong sense of common responsibility. Besides the self-help and mutual benefit schemes mentioned above, this has been reflected practically in a high degree of adherence to NUC appeals. Similarly, discipline has been exemplary among the youth/action committees, despite their entirely voluntary nature and broad spread. The latter have paid special attention to the safeguarding of property and prevention of common crime, which has seen a marked drop during the uprising.

³⁶ M ‘Omar, ‘Bayna Nablus al-hurrah . . . wa Yahuda al-hurrah’ (Between free Nablus . . . and free Judea), *Watan* (Tunis and Sarajevo) 89 (6th year), 20–28 February 1989.

³⁷ On the statutes of both formations, *Filistin ath-Thawrah* 728 and 733 (17th year), 11 December 1988 and 22 January 1989.

Dynamism is also due to Palestinian success in retaining the initiative. At the tactical level the Strike Forces constantly carry the battle to the Israeli army and armed settlers. The youths usually choose the place and time of confrontation, and its duration. One consequence has been that the youth/action committees have not only kept their structure intact, but have even managed to reappear within hours of massive security sweeps. In seeking frequent contact, the Strike Forces are moreover implementing a cardinal tenet of insurrections and civilian resistance campaigns. That they should still be doing so after suffering heavy casualties for eighteen months is due to the depth of their resolve. Such strength of feeling has at times prompted crowds of exasperated civilians to charge heavily-armed troops in order to free detainees or gate-crash makeshift prison camps where they are visiting relatives. In other instances, youths acting on their own initiative or responding to provocation have attacked Israeli soldiers with knives; though general policy has been to avoid armed attacks, occasional incidents have served to keep the army stretched on the alert.³⁸

The NUC has also sought to retain the strategic initiative through careful selection of means and timing. In effect it has exercised battle management through two elements: response and escalation. On one hand, it has insisted on responding to Israeli counter-action—such as breaking the commercial strike or tax boycott—by pushing through its original instructions. Thus, having tried in vain to force shops to open during the afternoon strike hours and to close during the morning business hours set by the NUC, the Israelis finally opted to ignore the strike altogether. On the other hand, the NUC has escalated action by the Strike Forces in response to Israeli escalation. The government decision in March 1988 to permit a free shoot-to-kill policy by soldiers and armed settlers against protesters brandishing molotov cocktails prompted the NUC call for an arson campaign against Israeli forests and fields. And Israeli use of plastic bullets from August 1988 onwards was met by a new wave of molotov attacks. The NUC also adroitly redefined missions and shifted the geographical focus from time to time in order to avoid exhausting any one sector.

Innovativeness is another feature that reflects the mass-based and youthful nature of the *intifadah*. The formation of agricultural relief

³⁸ Appeal No 38 issued in March 1989 called for attacks with knives, axes and molotov cocktails, but not firearms. Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir had warned that if Palestinians used firearms 'there will be neither survivors nor refugees among them'. Quoted in *Filistin ath-Thawrah* 722 (17th year), 23 October 1988.

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committees or neighbourhood watches, home bakeries or an 'early warning' system: all are local responses to real needs. The committee structure of the uprising and the operational methods of the NUC are themselves innovations developed over time. In its immediate purpose, combating the occupation, the *intifadah* has proven especially effective. Unlike former modes of clandestine resistance, mounting mass demonstrations and creating myriad points of contact has forced the Israeli army to deploy tens of thousands of troops in the OT. As a result, the army has had to call up reservists and double their tour of active duty to the full sixty-two day annual limit (and often beyond, to seventy-five or even eighty days). It has also expended vast funds on ammunition and such new weapons as truck-mounted and heliborne rock-spewing cannons. The Palestinians have magnified the cost of repression in simple ways: hooked nails on roads disabled 6,000 military vehicles in the first six months of the uprising, while sticks and stones damaged 3,000 buses of the monopolistic Egged bus company in 1988.³⁹ Direct costs alone in the first year led to a defence budget increase of \$220-250 million, with the toll cost of repression to the army running at an estimated \$1.65 million daily.⁴⁰ To this is added the expense to the army and the ailing Israeli economy of mobilising reservists.

Finally, what many Palestinians view as an innovation is the *izdiwā-jīyah* (duality), or rather multiplicity, of their structures. The deliberate redundancy of almost every institution—from press services and information centres to medical, youth and action committees, and even to the NUC itself—has enabled the *intifadah* to survive the detention of between 20,000 and 30,000 persons and the arrest of some 200 alleged resistance cells since December 1987. Redundancy has also ensured that whenever Israeli forces locate a printing press, NUC appeals have still been published on time. More remarkable is the NUC's ability to ensure simultaneous distribution of the appeals throughout the Territories and to co-ordinate policy and action, despite Israeli blockades that have combined physical isolation of entire areas with suspension of telephone and postal services. Aiding the NUC in this regard has been its ability to transmit its appeals to the PLO abroad (through the unblocked telephone services of Jerusalem and Israel itself), which then relays them in daily broad-

³⁹ *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), 18 July 1988; and *International Herald Tribune*, 4 January 1989.

⁴⁰ Figures from *Jane's Defence Weekly* (London) 11 (7) 18 February 1989; and *Ha'aretz*, cited in *Filistin ath-Thawrah* 728 (17th year), 11 December 1988.

casts from radio stations in surrounding Arab countries.⁴¹ Duality has, moreover, reduced the impact of Israeli measures on the pace of the *intifadah*, by enabling each village, camp, or city neighbourhood to operate autonomously. In providing appropriate associations for every social category, organisational multiplicity has also ensured much greater mass mobilisation by 'combing through' the population repeatedly.

The *intifadah*'s external impact

Israel

Caught in the battle of wills with the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel too has had to pay a price. This has been relatively minor in human terms: fifteen dead and 1,500 wounded (3-5 per cent of Palestinian casualties), mostly soldiers and mostly with stones. But the economic dislocation in Israel has been major. According to Finance Minister Dan Meridor, direct losses for 1988 reached \$758 million. This figure apparently includes military expenses, damage to vehicles and infrastructure, burnt fields and forests, and lost government revenue.

Indirect losses have been even greater, whether due to the Palestinian labour boycott, the call up of reservists, or subsequent opportunity loss. Hardest hit have of course been the labour-intensive construction and agriculture sectors. Due to prevailing insecurity tourism has declined sharply, leading to a loss of \$200-500 million.⁴² Lost revenue in the banking sector may be as high as \$16 million per month, while the drop in exports to the OT is valued at around \$500 million. In all, Israeli gross domestic product suffered a 2-3 per cent drop in 1988, reducing the projected growth rate to 0-1 per cent, indicating a total loss in production of over \$1 billion. With direct costs, the final bill of the *intifadah* for the first year may well approach the \$2 billion mark set by US and Palestinian analysts.⁴³ This cost has contributed to a growing crisis in the Israeli economy, reflected in 32 per cent inflation, 13 per cent devaluation of the shekel, 7.2 per cent unemployment, a real-wages decline of 7-8 per cent, and a \$5.3 billion trade deficit.⁴⁴

⁴¹ The PLO runs stations from the Sidon area in Lebanon, Baghdad and Algeria, while the dissident PFLP-GC faction is probably responsible for the Al-Quds station beaming from southern Syria.

⁴² P Kidron, 'Israel's faltering economy', *Middle East International* 342, 20 January 1989.

⁴³ A Lewis, 'Israel: "status quo is no-exit road"', *International Herald Tribune*, 13 February 1989; and H as-Sab', 'Al-iqtisad al-Isra'ili fi mahab al-intifadah' (The Israeli economy in the winds of the uprising), *As-Safir*, 9 December 1988.

⁴⁴ P Kidron, 'Israel's faltering economy', and *International Herald Tribune*, 6 January 1989.

Politically, the *intifadah* has prompted a shift towards the right in the Israeli public, expressed in an improved performance by the Likud Party in parliamentary and municipal elections since November 1988. However, it has also promoted the growth of an Israeli minority more firmly and vocally committed to withdrawal from the OT.⁴⁵ Forcing the issue in particular has been the PLO's diplomatic initiative, based on its acceptance of UN resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist in peace and security alongside a Palestinian state. Thus smaller leftist parties such as Mapam and the Citizen's Rights Movement have adopted formal platforms calling for withdrawal talks with the PLO and a possible two-state solution. In this they join the Communist Party, Rakah, the Progressive List for Peace and the Arab Democratic Party (all with mixed Israeli-Arab membership). A growing number of Israeli opposition MPs, political figures and academics have attended public conferences abroad jointly with Palestinians and PLO officials. Though most dialogue is indirect, the pressure is growing to abrogate the Israeli law banning contact with the PLO. Of mounting concern to the authorities too is the increased spirit of nationalism and defiance among Palestinian citizens of Israel (the 'Israeli Arabs' who form an 18 per cent minority), 663 of whom had been arrested by mid-1988 in incidents related to the *intifadah*.⁴⁶

As significant has been the shift within sections of the Israeli mainstream. This includes a minority within the Labour Party, some of whose members have privately met PLO representatives abroad. In spring 1988, between 150 and 200 retired and reserve senior Israeli officers formed a Council for Peace and Security advocating withdrawal from the OT on the grounds that they are not vital to Israeli security. Since then other, more 'establishment' think-tanks have presented broadly similar arguments or advised talking to the PLO.⁴⁷ Though entirely hostile to such steps, former defence minister, Ariel Sharon, has acknowledged the impact of the *intifadah* by complaining that the Palestinian state was being formed before Israel's very eyes.⁴⁸ And subtle hints at the necessity of a political solution have come from senior officials such as Chief-of-Staff General Dan Shomron, who told a parliamentary committee on 11 January 1989 that the army could not

⁴⁵ Two Israeli assessments of the impact of the uprising are: Bar-On, 'Israeli reactions to the uprising', and E. Kaufman, 'The *intifadah* and the peace camp in Israel', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17 (4), summer 1988.

⁴⁶ *Yediot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), 3 August 1988.

⁴⁷ For example, the Jaffee Center.

⁴⁸ *As-Safir*, 15 February 1989.

suppress or end the uprising because it was a national struggle.⁴⁹ Soon afterwards, the controversy about methods employed to repress the uprising led the energy minister to join opposition calls for restrictions on the use of live and plastic bullets, and caused the commander of the army's Logistic Branch to resign in protest over the effect on troop morale.⁵⁰ By March 1989, Israeli Intelligence was advising the government that the uprising could not be ended 'without talking to the PLO'.⁵¹

The USA

An important factor in the official Israeli position is the US stance, partly because the USA is a self-declared strategic ally of Israel and partly because it provides the latter with military and economic aid in the form of grants worth \$3.6 billion per annum. US attitudes have been affected by the *intifadah*, and by the failure of all attempts to bypass the PLO politically. An added pressure has been growing international unanimity—embracing the USA's main Western allies—concerning the need for a solution addressing Palestinian needs, especially the right to self-determination. That the latter should be embodied in a state is also the subject of growing consensus. Since its declaration by the PLO on 15 November 1988, the new State of Palestine has been recognised by over 90 countries including the USSR, the PRC, and leading non-aligned nations. NATO-member Turkey has extended formal recognition, while its French, Greek and Spanish colleagues have approved the principle. The European Economic Community has moreover responded to the *intifadah* by reiterating its support for a substantive international peace conference attended by the PLO, and by delaying trade protocols with Israel until it allowed free export of Palestinian agricultural products from the OT.

Under such pressures, the US administration was more than ready to deal publicly with the PLO by the time the formal dialogue had been approved on 14 December 1988. Having suffered international censure for denying Arafat a visa to address the UN General Assembly in New York, it then accepted the statement he made at a hastily-organised press conference as sufficient for meeting its conditions. That the US administration was keen to maintain the dialogue soon became clear in its muted reactions to anti-Israeli guerrilla attacks mounted by opposi-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 January 1989.

⁵⁰ *Ma'ariv* (Tel Aviv), 11 January 1989; and *As-Safir*, 17 January 1989.

⁵¹ A Cowell, 'Significant meeting', *International Herald Tribune*, 28 March 1989.

tion PLO groups in south Lebanon in the early months of 1989. In fact, the US position has effectively moved closer to Palestinian definitions of terrorism and armed struggle: the former involves deliberate anti-civilian violence or operations outside the OT (such as aircraft hijackings), and the latter guerrilla attacks against military targets. Though declaring its opposition to both forms the US administration has in effect accepted the distinction, allowing the PLO to affirm the Palestinian right to use military means to resist foreign occupation. A cynic might note that the USA would only be conceding in the Palestinian case what it has actively assisted in Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan.

At the very least, the preceding suggests that the USA is unlikely to break off talks with the PLO. Meanwhile, cracks are showing in the normally solid wall of support that Israel enjoys within the US Congress, expressed in the warning by two members of the Foreign Appropriations Committee that financial assistance to the Jewish state may be reduced in 1990 if it continues to abuse Palestinian human rights in the OT. This followed the publication in January 1989 of an official US annual report citing serious Israeli violations. Later, Secretary of State James Baker observed that the eventuality of Israeli talks with the PLO 'should not be categorically ruled out', while President George Bush formally stated his rejection of 'Israeli sovereignty over or permanent control of the West Bank and Gaza'.⁵² The effect of these shifts and of growing support for US-PLO and Israeli-PLO talks among US Jewry was reflected in the guarded comment by Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, a noted hard-liner, that negotiations with Palestinian 'sympathisers' of the PLO might be possible.⁵³

The PLO

Without a doubt, the PLO has been the main institutional beneficiary of the *intifadah*. Besides the obvious rise in its international stature, the improvement in its political fortunes has come in three main areas: internal relations, the balance with Syria, and ties with Jordan. In the first case, the uprising has led to confirmation of Arafat's leadership and to

⁵² *International Herald Tribune* 15 March and 7 April 1989.

⁵³ An indication of evolving views among mainstream US Jews is the suggestion by the deputy financial editor of the *Washington Post* that the USA should reduce its aid to Israel in the latter's own interest. S Pearlstein, 'Israel: the case for independence from America' and 'Israel does aid really promote compromise?', *ibid.*, 14 and 15 March 1989.

marginalisation of most opposition groups.⁵⁴ This evolution built on the reconciliation effected between Fateh and the PFLP and DFLP in April 1987, following two years of the gruelling 'camps war' waged by the Shi'ite Amal militia in Lebanon since May 1985. The uprising further strengthened Arafat's position, resulting in the loss by the smaller guerrilla groups of their long-held veto power over decision-making in the PLO. For this reason and under pressure to respond to the challenge of the *intifadah*, the 'loyalist' opposition joined Fateh in approving the political programme endorsing UN resolutions 181, 242 and 338 that was issued by the nineteenth Palestine National Council meeting in November 1988. The 'rejectionist', anti-Arafat opposition based in Damascus confirmed its marginality by boycotting the entire PLO debate, leading to rifts within its own ranks.⁵⁵

By the same token, the PLO's position in the balance with Syria has improved markedly, after six years of open feuding. As noted above, the groups allied to Damascus have become completely marginal politically, and lack any mass base among diaspora Palestinians or in the OT. The impact of the uprising was made especially clear by two events in April 1988. One was the funeral held in Damascus of Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad), Arafat's deputy and co-founder of Fateh, who was assassinated by Israeli commandos in Tunis on 16 April. Despite the government's avowed hostility to Wazir, between 500,000 and one million Palestinians and Syrians attended. Bending to the shifting balance, Syrian President Asad grudgingly accepted to receive Arafat a few days later, after having pilloried him as a traitor and declared him *persona non grata* since June 1983. Arafat's visit was celebrated by further mass demonstrations that were undeterred by the continued presence of 2,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Syrian jails. In Lebanon, the pro-Syrian Amal militia not only lifted its siege of the refugee camps 'as a gift to the *intifadah*' in January 1988, but also concluded a security pact with Arafat's Fateh in December. As crucially, the long agony of the camps and the dramatic impact of the *intifadah* have enabled the PLO to circumvent Syria and assure both Arab and Soviet consensus regarding its current diplomatic strategy.

Most dramatic, arguably, has been the shift in the balance of the

⁵⁴ Internal Palestinian politics are discussed in Yezid Sayigh, 'Struggle within, struggle without: the transformation of PLO politics since 1982'.

⁵⁵ The Palestine Popular Struggle Front announced its withdrawal from the rejectionist alliance in January 1988, while the pro-Syrian wing of the Palestine Liberation Front formally rejoined the PLO.

PLO's relations with Jordan. Having been virtually ignored by its Jordanian hosts at the Arab Summit Meeting in Aman in November 1987, the PLO was able, at the emergency Summit convened especially in Algiers the following June, to impose itself as sole channel for funds to, and sole political interlocutor for, the OT to the exclusion of Jordan. Behind this change was the clear rejection of the Jordanian role by the *intifadah*, vehemently expressed in the NUC's public appeals. Failing to repair the damage, King Hussein announced the severance of administrative and financial ties with the OT on 31 July 1988, all but ending the constitutional link forged by the 1950 Act of Union between Jordan and the West Bank.⁵⁶ In confirming the PLO's status as sole Palestinian interlocutor, the king reversed government policy since 1986 that had sought to marginalise the organisation's role and establish a 'condominium' with the Israelis in the OT. Underlying current Jordanian policy are several concerns that it is designed to prevent: a revival of latent tensions within the kingdom between the Jordanian and Palestinian communities, especially at a time of growing economic recession; Israeli references to Jordan as the alternative Palestinian state; and the prospect of an Israeli resort to mass expulsion of Palestinians from the OT into Jordan.

The Palestinian diaspora

A major challenge is to define a role for the Palestinian diaspora to play despite the constraints of exile. At present this consists mainly of providing financial support. However, an emerging consensus among diaspora Palestinians stresses two issues in particular that they can affect.⁵⁷ One is the need to alter the balance of power with Israel further if it is to be prevailed upon to withdraw from the OT and permit the establishment of an independent Palestinian state—for which greater

⁵⁶ Recognised only by Britain and Pakistan, this union has widely been seen as 'annexation' by the Palestinians and most outside observers. On the Jordanian decision, see P Robins, 'Shedding half a kingdom: Jordan's dismantling of ties with the West Bank', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, forthcoming, 1989; and M Abdul-Hadi, 'The Jordanian disengagement: causes and effects', paper, Jerusalem: Palestine Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1988. A background to, and competent analysis of, Jordanian-Palestinian relations is in V Yorke, *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria and Israel*, London: Gower Press, 1988.

⁵⁷ Based on a reading of: S Ghabra, 'Al-intifadah al-Filistiniyyah: al-asbab wal-istimrar wal-ahdaf' (The Palestinian uprising: causes, continuity and aims), *Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi* (Beirut) 113 (11th year), July 1988; 'Anablawi, 'Al-intifadah ila ain? wa kaif? al-ihimalat wal-khayarat' (Whether the uprising? And how? Possibilities and options), *Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi* 116 (11th year), October 1988; Yusuf Sayigh, 'The *intifadah* and the balance of power in the region', paper presented at the Fourth Arab-European Dialogue, held in Bari, Italy, 6-8 November 1988; and 'Assaf, 'The strategic view and the Palestinian people's struggle'.

Arab involvement must be achieved. The second is to revitalise PLO departments and institutions and extend them further into the Palestinian communities in exile; that is, to revert from being a relatively elitist bureaucracy to the grassroots character of its own past and of the *intifadah*'s present. In both cases a lesson the *intifadah* is imparting to the Arab peoples and to the diaspora Palestinians—through its stress on the interrelated qualities of social solidarity, individual and collective responsibility, self-reliance and innovation, egalitarianism, and communal grassroots action—is to develop their own civic societies. Although still under military occupation, the state of Palestine declared on 15 November 1988 is already an example to the populations of surrounding Arab states of how to become citizens rather than subjects.

This does not necessarily mean that military action will have no place in the struggle, but that if practised it will be integrated within a more comprehensive and balanced strategy that relies heavily on political, social and economic action.⁵⁸ Its use will depend on practical need and an assessment of relevant circumstances, not on psychological need or considerations of political competition between rival guerrilla groups.⁵⁹ Similarly, whether by imparting new impetus to the national movement as a whole or by presenting a model of dynamic and self-reliant thinking, the *intifadah* offers an opportunity to base future Palestinian struggle on an integrated strategy that achieves coordination and complementarity between the two wings: the 'outside' of the diaspora and the 'inside' of the OT.

Besides pursuing its current diplomatic strategy and helping to organise the Palestinian people both inside and outside historical Palestine, the PLO faces two immediate tasks. One is to mobilise the world community towards restraining more effectively what one international jurist has termed as Israeli 'crimes of state' in the Occupied Territories.⁶⁰ The PLO has already made some headway in this regard by linking any discussion of a possible reduction in the intensity of protest inside the OT with a cessation of Israeli repression and military withdrawal. A

⁵⁸ Even among those not opposed to a settlement, some Palestinians argue that Israel is unlikely to withdraw from the OT for security reasons, unless there is credible military pressure on it to do so. A Thabet, 'Isra'il wad-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah: hudoud al-amn al-mutlaq' (Israel and the West Bank: the borders of absolute security), *Shu'un Filistiniyyah* 185, August 1988, pp 3-4.

⁵⁹ This is an approach argued before the uprising in Yezid Sayigh, 'Al-hawiyyah wash-shar'iyyah fis-siyasah al-Filistiniyyah: al-usus al-istratijiyyah li-siyasah idaliyyah jadidah' (Identity and legitimacy in Palestinian politics: the foundations for a new strategy of struggle), *ibid.*, 176-77, November-December 1987.

⁶⁰ R. Falk, 'Some legal reflections on prolonged Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2 (1) 1989, p 5.

second task is to alert the world community to the danger of what Israelis call 'transfer'. Faced with the so-called 'demographic threat' of having a Palestinian majority within Greater Israel, a number of influential Israelis are turning to the option of expelling as many Palestinians as possible into neighbouring Arab states, an ethnocidal option now mooted as a way of ending the *intifadah*.⁶¹ Defending this idea, Reserve General Rehavam Ze'evi asserts: 'if the transfer idea is immoral, then Zionism itself is immoral. All the settlement that has been carried out in the last 100 years was based on the transfer of Arabs'.⁶² In parallel, the PLO must refine its political programme further in order to address the Israeli people more effectively and so reinforce the growing majority that supports direct talks with the organisation.⁶³

The *intifadah*: the next phase

In the foreseeable future, however, the main driving force behind further change will remain the *intifadah*. For the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories, the challenge is to overcome certain internal shortcomings and expand the uprising. The main weakness is continued factionalism, which has led the PFLP to break ranks with NUC appeals on half a dozen occasions and has fuelled rivalry between the secular-minded PLO groups and the Islamic movement. Both problems were under control by early 1989, though disputes over certain elements of current PLO diplomacy (unconditional acceptance of UN resolution 242 and of Israel's right to exist in peace and security) still threaten unity. In the meantime, members of the traditional elite or pro-Jordanian leadership and individuals amenable to Israeli overtures still hope to regain a role, especially if the Israeli government maintains its refusal to deal with the PLO and seeks alternative interlocutors. However, such persons are suffering increased marginalisation as the uprising progresses.

For its own part, the leadership of the *intifadah* must expand the

⁶¹ The full statistics and arguments behind this threat are discussed in D McDowall, *Palestine and Israel: the uprising and beyond*, London: I B Tauris, 1989. The implications are also discussed in Y Harkabi, *Israel's Fateful Decisions*, London: I B Tauris, 1988. Though concluding that Israel must give up the Territories, he does so in order to retain the Jewish character of Israel. Use of the term 'ethnocidal' is based on the concept of 'cultural genocide' as 'destruction of the specific character of the persecuted "group" by forced transfer of children, forced exile, prohibition of the use of the national language, destruction of books, documents, monuments, and objects of historical, artistic or religious value', as defined in L Kruper, *Genocide: its political use in the twentieth century*, London: Penguin, 1981, p 30.

⁶² *The Guardian*, 6 September 1988.

⁶³ Public opinion polls in early 1989 indicated 54 and then 66 per cent support for talks on the basis of specific conditions (that Arafat had already accepted in December 1988).

system of popular committees. Coordination and integration in joint bodies between the various factions needs to be attained at every level and taken to all spheres of activity and geographical locations. Similarly, further effort is required to raise the degree of mobilisation and organisation of various social groups (for example women, professionals, or shopkeepers) in appropriate committees and unions. As important is the attempt to form cooperatives and alternative institutions, whether productive, medical, educational or otherwise. Work on this track appears to be progressing: social solidarity is if anything gaining in strength under Israeli repression, offering a basis for the success of local production, home economy, and welfare fund schemes; and after early setbacks clandestine education is now spreading again.

Having broken the barrier of fear, created new political facts, and raised the moral and material cost of occupation, the *intifadah* faces one last major task. This, the most difficult is to destroy the heart of the control system: the monopoly held by the Israeli military authorities over dispensation of permission for any and all aspects of Palestinian life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, formed of the triad of identity cards, permits and their fees, and taxes. In the absence of a credible military ability to remove occupation by force, the Palestinians can only eliminate this system by unanimous and sustained refusal to cooperate with it; in a word, through civil disobedience.⁶⁴ The success of such a campaign depends on intensive preparation, which the above-mentioned measures are aimed at achieving.⁶⁵ Behind the daily confrontations and mounting death toll, therefore, the NUC is continuously preparing the ground. It has taken sixteen months to come this far and may take many more before the impact of twenty years of occupation is sufficiently eroded, but the next phase is one of comprehensive civil disobedience, setting the basis for the emergence of a Palestinian state. The decision to come to terms with this eventuality or to resort to mass expulsion and so initiate a new spiral of conflict will then rest with Israel.

⁶⁴ Until December 1987 there was little systematic study in Palestinian circles of civil disobedience and civilian resistance. Two notable exceptions were M Awad, 'Non-violent resistance: a strategy for the occupied territories', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13 (4), summer 1984; and S Dajani, 'Civilian resistance in the Israeli-occupied Arab Territories', unpublished paper, Amman, April 1985. However the first full study to appear in Arabic came later, and did not refer to the Territories: 'A-H Khalaf, *Al-Muqawamah al-Mudaniyyah. madaris al-'amal al-jam-ahiri wa ashkuluha* (Civilian Resistance: the schools of mass action and its forms), Beirut: Arab Research Institute, 1988. In contrast to the expectations of these studies, though, the *intifadah* has achieved striking results by employing some violence in a regulated manner.

⁶⁵ According to a leading member of a major PLO faction in the Occupied Territories, associated with the NUC. Interviewed on behalf of the author in early 1989.

Brazil and inflation: a threat to democracy

Reflecting, at the end of 1988, on the year just ended and the prospects for the future, Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, one of Brazil's most distinguished social scientists and a former minister of finance, suggested that the best that could be hoped for 1989 was that hyperinflation might be avoided and the country might come safely through to the direct presidential elections scheduled for November.¹ Even this apparently modest hope might have seemed unduly optimistic from one who, only a few months earlier, had described Brazil as 'going through an unprecedented political and economic crisis',² and Bresser was careful to stress that even the containment of inflation would not solve more deeply rooted problems, above all, the huge fiscal deficit and foreign debt. These would have to be left to a directly elected president with greater credibility: 'there is not the courage for this in the present government, nor sufficient support among the ruling elites'.

These doubts were widely shared throughout the country. By December 1988, inflation for the year was running at a shade under 1000 per cent, with the monthly rate for December touching 28 per cent. A new constitution had been introduced in October, signifying real advances in terms of the consolidation of democracy, even if it was not as progressive as many on the left would have wished:³ but it had been resisted, and the work of the Constituent Assembly protracted, by reactionary elements, both inside the Assembly and from without, especially on such key issues as agrarian reform. Here a powerful right-wing pressure group, the União Democrática Ruralista (UDR, loosely translatable as Democratic Union of Farming Interests), had succeeded in producing new provisions more regressive than those of the Estatuto da Terra of the first military government, with the leader of the UDR, Ronaldo Caiado, being carried in triumph along the corridors of the Congress building.⁴

¹ *Istoé Senhor*, 4 January 1989, pp 83-4. See, too, on hyperinflation, *ibid* 26 October 1988, pp 34-7 and *Folha de São Paulo*, 20 October 1988.

² L. C. Bresser Pereira, 'De volta ao capital mercantil: C Prado Júnior e a crise da nova república', paper given in May 1988 at a conference at the State University of São Paulo (UNESP).

³ *Constituição, República Federativa do Brasil, 1988*, Brasília, 1988. Also *Veja*, 12 October 1988.

⁴ *Senhor*, 16 May 1988, pp 32-4. On the walls of the same corridors was an exhibition mounted by *Os sem-terra*, the landless, which included photographs of peasants killed in land disputes.

1988 had also seen President Sarney's success in blocking the proposal for a parliamentary form of government and in winning for himself a fifth year in office, by the unscrupulous use of the extensive patronage available to a president and by other forms of persuasion. This was an episode which brought little lustre to the Congress/Constituent Assembly. The extension of Sarney's term also underlined the persistent influence of the armed forces in the political life of the country, which was reflected further in the formal powers still granted to them in the new constitution.⁵ The insistence on the fifth year was widely interpreted not just as a further sign of Sarney's personal vanity and ambition, but as a device to prevent the election to the federal presidency of Leonel Brizola, leader of the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (Democratic Labour Party, PDT) and former governor of Rio de Janeiro, who would have been the strongest candidate in a direct election in 1988.

The struggle for the extra year had also served to damage President Sarney's standing even further: he was now almost wholly discredited and was widely regarded as the creature of the armed forces and of those who, still linked to the old regime, resisted demands for change.⁶ This tutelage, especially expressed through the minister of the army, General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves, and General Ivan Souza Mendes of the Serviço Nacional de Informações (National Intelligence Service, SNI), had been increased in recent months by his almost complete break with the Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, PMDB), the dominant party in the Congress, with which Sarney had maintained only the most uneasy of relationships since his fortuitous ascent to the presidency in 1985.

It was the vote over Sarney's fifth year which precipitated the long forecast split in the PMDB, which had never managed the transition from a loose opposition coalition to a party of government, and which, in the Congress/Constituent Assembly, was firmly weighted to the

⁵ On the range of powers of the armed forces and the intelligence services, see A Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

⁶ By contrast with the unprecedentedly high indices of popularity after the Cruzado Plan in 1986, a survey by the *Folha de São Paulo* on 13 March 1988 showed that only 11 per cent of respondents thought Sarney's government to be 'very good' or 'good', with 64 per cent considering it 'very bad' or 'bad'. This was worse than the level of approval for the last military president, João Figueiredo, at his lowest ebb in March 1984.

centre-right.⁷ The split had produced the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB), popularly known as the Tucanos. This new party, strongly centred on São Paulo, contained a wealth of talent, but was top-heavy and lacking in organisation at the national level. Bresser Pereira was now a member of this party, which included, for example, the former governor of São Paulo, Franco Montoro, the two São Paulo senators, Mário Covas and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and other such distinguished politicians as José Richa from Paraná, and Pimenta da Veiga from Minas Gerais. Their declared aim was to provide an authentic social-democratic party, breaking with the populism and *fisiologismo* (scramble for office) still so prevalent in the PMDB.

The appearance of the Tucanos also reflected a persistent anxiety over the failure to build even the semblance of a strong party system, echoing the oft-repeated question: how can one have democracy without political parties? November 1988 brought new hope in this respect, with the emphatic success of the left-wing parties in the election of mayors and councillors, especially the PDT and, more dramatically still, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (the Workers' Party, PT). The PT is undoubtedly the party with the most coherent class basis, with strong links to the more militant sections of the trade union movement which found expression in the struggles of the late 1970s.

The PT vote also, in part, reflected the widespread anger over the killing of striking workers at Volta Redonda, almost on the eve of the polls, which was yet another sign of the continuing strength of the armed forces. A more hopeful development in terms of union, employer, and even government relations was the signing of a 'social pact' in October 1988, as part of a joint effort to control the frightening rise in inflation which successive changes of strategy had done nothing to halt.

It is worth looking again at Bresser Pereira's hopes for 1989, focusing on the problem of inflation, the 'social pact', the November 1989 elections, and the so-called Summer Plan.

⁷ See P. Flynn, 'Brazil 1988: the consolidation of democracy?', paper presented to the European Consortium for Political Research, Rimini, Italy, 5-10 April 1988, p. 68. Also D. Fleischer, 'The constituent assembly and the transformation strategy: attempts to shift political power from the presidency to congress' in L. Graham and R. Wilson (eds), *Contemporary Issues in Brazilian Public Policy*, Austin, Texas: Texas University Press (forthcoming). See also Fleischer's: *Um Perfil Socio-Econômico Político e Ideológico da Assembleia Constituinte de 1987*, paper presented to ANPOCS, Aguas de São Pedro, Brazil, 1987.

The social pact

The wider background to the attempts to achieve some kind of 'social pact' was the consistent failure to produce an effective economic strategy since the start of the 'New Republic', not least in response to inflation: the more immediate context was a rash of strikes, in which the major demand was for wage adjustments for losses caused by inflation.

By late 1988, it was evident that one of the principal reasons for the continuous shifts in economic policy and the rapid change of policy-makers was lack of political control and consensus. Sarney, even by the time of the Bresser Plan (June 1987), had had three ministers of finance, four presidents of the Central Bank, and five different economic projects in less than three years. Starting with the *Cruzeiro* in March 1985, and reading Tancredo Neves' message that spending was forbidden, he had introduced the *Cruzado* in February 1986, modified this with the *Cruzadinho* in July that year, produced *Cruzado II* in November 1986, and the *Novo Cruzado* (more commonly known as the Bresser Plan) in June 1987. After Bresser had been sacrificed to immediate political interest like Dornelles and Funaro before him, Mailson da Nóbrega had introduced yet another strategy, a new austerity programme of 'beans and rice', which, instead of facing up to the IMF and the international banking community (as had been done with the partial moratorium of February 1987), had sought to 'normalise' relations with the international system.

Sarney had won unprecedented popularity with the Cruzado Plan in February 1986, but had gone against the wishes of the architects of the Plan by introducing it earlier than they had advised, for his own political reasons. The cynical dismantling of the Plan, while votes still were being counted, was neither forgiven nor forgotten by those who had supported Sarney and the PMDB enthusiastically earlier in the year.

The Bresser Plan also foundered on the rocks of political advantage, with insufficient backing from the President, the business community and even Bresser's own party. Bresser Pereira's proposals were attacked for hitting at real wages and for generating a large trade surplus only at the cost of a fall in domestic consumption and a rise in unemployment.

While Bresser ended the *gatilho*, or wages trigger, incorporated into the Cruzado Plan to adjust wages in line with inflation, he provided another 'life-raft', the *unidade de referência de preços* (URP), a unit for readjusting wages in relation to price rises. This was used every three months at first; but, by October 1988, was being operated monthly in

The response from both politicians and the public was sceptical, especially with regard to price controls. Many doubted the government's intent, let alone its ability, to cut public spending (one of the major sources of inflation).¹⁰ Such doubts were only underlined by the awareness that the Minister of Finance had no confidence in the 'pact', which he had done his best to oppose.

The disagreement over the 'social pact' showed the extent to which the Sarney government was in disarray and how little public confidence it commanded. But worse was still to come: just as the country prepared for the elections of 15 November 1988 in over four thousand *municípios*, striking steel-workers occupied the National Steel Company's complex at Volta Redonda,¹¹ demanding wage increases, including the payment of the URP which had been frozen since June. On 8 November 1988 the plant was surrounded by troops, police and military police, culminating on the evening of 9 November with troops opening fire on the strikers, killing three young workers and wounding at least another twenty-three.

The killings provoked outrage throughout the country, with public opinion further incensed when General Lopes da Silva, the officer in charge, made the unsubstantiated claim: 'Our men were attacked by workers trained in the technique of urban guerrilla warfare.'¹² There was also a feeble attempt to justify the action in terms of the new constitution, which permitted one of the three arms of government to call on the armed forces for help in time of crisis. The arguments that this had been done when a local judge had asked for help in freeing the steel plant of striking workers were dismissed by lawyers, such as Raymundo Faoro, who maintained that the constitution envisaged major national crises, not local strike action.

All evidence pointed to the fact that the forceful occupation of the steelworks by the army had been sanctioned by Sarney's most senior military ministers (head of the Military Household, General Bayma Denis, General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves and General Ivan de Souza Mendes) before appealing to the judge. The order did not come from

¹⁰ *Istoé Senhor*, 2 November 1988, pp 30-9. See Bresser Pereira's recommendations, *ibid*, p 34, and those of César Maia, the spokesman of the PTB, warning against a social pact which is no more than a wage freeze. He wants strong fiscal measures, gradual de-indexation and monetary reform. Both Bresser and the spokesman for the PTB want a stronger line on the foreign debt.

¹¹ Volta Redonda is Latin America's largest steel plant, and one of the oldest. Its last expansion programme in the 1970s cost US \$4 billion. Its annual exports are worth about US \$600 million. See R Noblat, 'O preço do quinto ano de mandato', *Jornal do Brasil*, 20 November 1988.

¹² *Istoé Senhor*, 16 November 1988, p 32, says that some of the workers had stones, and pieces of wood and metal.

Sarney, who, instead of condemning the first such killings of his presidency, in effect approved the decision of his generals. The Minister of Justice, Paulo Brossard, instead of calling for an immediate investigation of the officer in charge, spoke of the workers carrying out 'a real rebellion in the name of the right to strike', and denounced the 'plan' of 'anti-government forces . . .', whose aim was to overturn Brazil by paralysing the country's electrical industry. Sarney referred to similar threats to democracy, while General da Silva told Dom Waldir Calheiros, bishop of Volta Redonda: 'I am sorry about the deaths, but they will serve as an example for others.'

The municipal elections

In the run-up to the elections of 15 November 1988, the country was gripped by a wave of strikes, not just in the steel industry, but among civil servants, teachers, workers in the oil and electrical industries, in municipal government in Rio de Janeiro, on the underground in São Paulo, in the Secretariat of Education in Brasília, and in other categories, including civil airline controllers.¹³ These widespread stoppages and the continuing mark-up of prices raised serious doubts about the chances of success of the 'social pact' and the containment of inflation. Now, however, all eyes were on the municipal elections as a further test of the government's standing, of the fortunes of political parties, and as a pointer to the presidential elections of 1989.

It was generally believed that the PMDB would do badly, certainly by comparison with its performance in 1986. Not only was the party split, but it had the great electoral disadvantage of being associated with Sarney and his government, against which a massive protest vote was expected. It seemed probable that its nation-wide organisation would lead it to win most of the votes at a national level, but there were doubts as to how well it would do in the major cities where it had previously been strong. The PMDB seemed to be in the position once held by the government party, ARENA: namely, that it would win overall, but mainly in the *fundão do Brasil* (the areas of more traditional voting patterns).

It was more likely that some of the smaller parties, such as the PTB, would make their mark, and, even more so, the PT and the PDT. There was also a general belief that many Brazilians would register their pro-

¹³ *Veja*, 16 November 1988, p 38, gives a breakdown, including the numbers involved, the length and aims of the strikes, and the results, as far as they are known.

test in the traditional way, either by not voting at all, or by returning blank or spoilt votes.¹⁴

Of the major cities, Rio de Janeiro seemed certain to go to Marcelo Alencar of the PDT, who was campaigning as Brizola's candidate, but São Paulo was still an open race.¹⁵ Up to mid-September 1988 it seemed that Paulo Maluf, the former mayor and governor, would gain a decisive majority, but in the days preceding the elections, both the PMBD candidate João Oswaldo Leiva, and the PT's Luiza Erundina de Souza, were winning strong support. Luiza Erundina, an immigrant from the north-east, was able to appeal to the substantial *nordestino* vote, but was not the preferred candidate of either the party leader, Lula, or of other such influential spokesmen as Francisco Weffort. Erundina appeared to some people to be too radical in tone, and lacking the experience to run Brazil's largest, most important city.¹⁶ Lula had made it clear that he preferred Plínio de Arruda Sampaio as the PT candidate, while Weffort thought, only two weeks before polling, that Maluf would win.¹⁷

In the end, it was in São Paulo that the results were most dramatic. Luiza Erundina confounded her critics and won an historic victory for the PT, even though she emphasised, immediately after her election, that her main commitment was to a popular democratic administration, open to all 'professionals' of various parties, one of whose first jobs must be to tackle the budgetary problems bequeathed by the Quadros government.¹⁸ Elsewhere, too, the PT had exciting successes. In the

¹⁴ On this tradition, and the elections of 1970 in particular, see P Flynn, *Brazil: a political analysis*, London: Ernest Benn, 1978, pp 450-1.

¹⁵ *Istoé Senhor*, 9 November 1988, pp 34-6. Also *Veja*, 19 October 1988, p 51.

¹⁶ It was, of course, untrue to say that she lacked experience. When elected, Erundina was just under fifty-four years old. Originally, from Paraíba, she was a law student, then a social worker, joining the PT after its formation in 1979. In 1982 she was elected *vereadora* in São Paulo (with 26,043 votes, mostly from the poorer areas), then state deputy (with 35,622 votes). Erundina's main work was with the landless and homeless, concerned, for example, with the provision of crèches and urban transport. She said that São Paulo did not currently provide 'objective conditions' for a socialist administration, emphasising, rather, 'competence' and 'realism'. *Istoé Senhor*, 23 November 1988, pp 50-4.

¹⁷ *Istoé Senhor*, 25 October 1988. Also *Veja*, 23 November, p 34, and Weffort's eventual analysis of the results, *Folha de São Paulo*, 20 November 1988, when he compares them, appropriately, with the unexpected MDB successes in 1974 (though he fails to add that the victory frightened the victors almost as much as it did their opponents).

¹⁸ *Istoé Senhor*, 23 November 1988. Her refusal to be exclusively identified with the PT may, in part, reflect the struggle which she had to secure the nomination as candidate in the convention of June 1988. There were those in the party who were dismayed at this choice of a 'Shiite' (or radical), a woman (not least, one from Paraíba) and a spinster, a fine blend of *paulista* and sexist perception. It should be remembered, of course, that Erundina had run in elections for mayor in 1985, as the *vice-prefeito* candidate to Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, who had won 20 per cent of the votes. Suplicy was now elected as *vereador*, working closely with Erundina and paying tribute to her great capacity for work.

main industrial centres, and more generally in São Paulo, it won São Bernardo do Campo, Diadema, Santo André, Campinas and Santos. It took Porto Alegre, in the south, and Vitória, the capital of Espírito Santo, while PT candidates also did exceptionally well both in Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, where they came second, respectively, to Marcelo Alencar (PDT) and Pimenta da Veiga (PSDB), and almost snatched Goiânia from the PMDB.

Apart from Rio de Janeiro, the PDT won Curitiba, with Jayme Lerner (an established candidate who had twice been mayor already, though not previously elected), Sarney's state capital city of São Luís, and Natal, also in the north-east. It also came a close second in Fortaleza. In the large capital cities, the total PDT vote was somewhat over 8 million, while the PT received over 11.5 million.¹⁹ The shift to the left was also seen, to a lesser degree, by the victories of the Partido Socialista Brasileiro (the Brazilian Socialist Party, PSB) in Manaus, Aracaju and Macapá. The PFL, by contrast, was mainly reduced to such conservative strongholds as Maceio, João Pessoa, Boa Vista and Cuiabá, though it won a major victory in Recife against the PMDB of Miguel Arraes.²⁰ It also had significant success in the *municípios* of the interior. The number of PFL controlled *prefeituras* shot up from 600 to 1,394, while those of the PMDB fell from 2,500 to only 1,100. The PDS's only spectacular success was in Florianópolis, where it won 55 per cent of the vote. The single greatest loser was the PMDB, even though, as predicted, it won more votes across the country than any other party. It received a massive vote of no confidence in the principal urban, industrial centres of the country, which had previously been its source of strength. Brazil's 70 million voters had made their judgement on Sarney and the party associated with him over the last three years.

At the same time, it was clear that this was not just a protest vote. Sarney, in a series of intemperate outbursts, spoke of Brazil being en route to socialism, warning young air force officers: 'We have to fight this kind of anarchic leftism which is seeking to destroy democratic values.' He also complained, oddly for someone concerned with democratic values, that the PT had used the elections 'only as a means for coming to power'. Others, including some of his own ministers, were more sober in their judgement, seen, for instance, in the courteous wel-

¹⁹ It was now estimated that the PT, victorious in 37 *prefeituras*, would start in 1989 to administer cities and towns accounting for about 40 per cent of Brazil's GNP. *Veja*, 23 November 1988, p. 29.

²⁰ *Istoé Senhor*, 23 November 1988, p. 41. For a useful listing of results in the 25 capitals see *O Globo*, 18 November 1988.

come given to Luiza Erundina when she spoke to a meeting of 100 representatives of FIESP in December 1988, outlining her plans for the government of São Paulo.²¹

The idea that the vote was not just a plebiscite against Sarney and the PMDB, but now allowed the PT, as a genuinely popular party, to face up to the hard realities of social problems was also the theme of the editorial in the *Folha de São Paulo* of 16 November. The fact that the electorate had, in effect, turned against manipulation by the politicians, especially the PMDB in Congress and the PMDB governors (who had deferred presidential elections to 1989, largely in an attempt to keep Brizola out) was also regarded as evidence of growing political maturity on the part of the electorate.

This critical electoral response was an important pointer to the future. It stressed the maturity of the Brazilian electorate, who were tired of being patronised by politicians locked in the categories of the past. The electorate was fed up with the promises and betrayals, in evidence in the Cruzado Plan; it was disgusted with the scramble for office shown by the PMDB in its approximation to power, and angered by manifest corruption in government, shown by Sarney's buying of support for his fifth year in office.

The voting of 15 November 1988 was an unambiguous warning to the politicians of the old parties, including the PMDB. It was also a shot across the bows of the PDT, as seen in the Baixada Fluminense, where too many votes had been lost to the PT.²² But the results also provided timely warnings for the PT, even in São Paulo, where they contained a message from the grass-roots to party leaders who had, in the past, been too ready to speak for their supporters. The support, and even the

²¹ An article in the *Jornal da Tarde*, 16 October 1988, reported that businessmen in São Paulo were not unduly alarmed, but willing to wait to see the policies adopted by the new city government (even if they would have preferred to see Maluf in office). This was in sharp contrast to the report in the *Jornal do Brasil* (16 October 1988) of Sarney's deep alarm over the 'threat to social harmony'. The editorial that day, like an article by its editor, Marcos Sá Corrêa, also saw positive elements in the results.

²² In the case of Rio de Janeiro, one of the shocks for the PDT, despite its easy victory, was the size of the PT vote in the Baixada Fluminense, previously regarded as one of the strongest centres of support for Brizola. See, for example, *O Globo*, 18 November 1988, which gives a breakdown of the vote in various *bairros* (neighbourhoods). For sober reflection on the PDT performance in the Baixada, see C. Maia's comments in *Jornal do Brasil*, 24 November 1988. Maia, a strong candidate for the governorship of Rio de Janeiro, worries about some of the poorest elements in Duque de Caxias, Nilópolis and São João de Meriti loosening their ties with the PDT, when the middle classes are, in some cases, showing that they would rather vote for the PT than for Brizola. The article also notes that in, for example, the *zona sul* (Southern Zone), in Flamengo, Botafogo, Copacabana, Laranjeiras and Ipanema, only one in five electors voted.

funds,²³ for Luiza Erundina came not from the top, but from bases which had to be heard and not just led.

The Summer Plan

One immediate reaction to the results of the November 1988 elections was a quickening of interest in a new stabilisation programme (soon referred to as the Summer Plan), which would go beyond the 'social pact'. General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves warned Sarney that continuing inflation would further strengthen the left, so that just as Sarney's fifth year in office had been conceived as a device to keep out Brizola, the Summer Plan was intended to counteract November's shift to the left. Mailson wanted to reduce inflation by June 1989, otherwise the elections in November 1989 would be a walk-over for the left.²⁴ On 15 January 1989, Sarney announced the Summer Plan. Its essential features were to cross three zeroes off the Cruzado (as had been done to the Cruzeiro in February 1986), producing a New Cruzado, devalued by 16.38 per cent. The Plan was designed to introduce a credit-squeeze, to freeze prices on about 170 essential items for an initial period of 45 days, and to put an end to indexation, especially for salaries. The latter was to be effected by abolishing the URP, the calculation for adjusting wages.

Another essential feature of the package, aimed at reducing the deficit by cutting public spending, was the intention to sell or deactivate at least fourteen state enterprises and to close six ministries, or to incorporate them into others.²⁵ For the same purpose, it was proposed that about 90,000 state employees should be sacked, many of them political appointees under the New Republic.

²³ Funding for the PT had always been a problem, not least in Luiza Erundina's campaign. The successes of November 1988 brought, or would bring, welcome relief, since every PT office holder is expected to make a substantial contribution to party funds. The increase after the change in office in January 1989, was expected to be about Cz\$20 million a month, the better part of US \$20,000. See *Estado de São Paulo*, 18 November 1988. All new *prefeitos* would also benefit, from 1 March 1989, from the new constitutional provision of 25 per cent of the ICM (a sales tax) to the *municípios*. See *Folha de São Paulo*, 16 November 1988.

²⁴ See R. Noblat, 'O preço do quinto ano de mandato', *Jornal do Brasil*, 20 November 1988. A similar explanation is in *Políticas Governamentais* 43, Rio de Janeiro: IBASE (Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis), January 1989, p. 3. 'It must be remembered that the Summer Plan was not exactly a government initiative, as Sarney wanted to present it. It is a reaction of the bureaucratic machine to social pressures. The elections of November were a clear signal... The rise of more progressive politicians is frightening the Planalto group.' Also p. 8, 'It is a political, not an economic question which is under discussion.'

²⁵ On the eventual administrative reform and merging of ministries see *Istoé Senhor*, 18 January 1989, pp. 25-6.

One of the most controversial proposals was, predictably, the abolition of wages indexation, which had been one of the central planks of both the Cruzado and the Bresser Plans. Prices were to be frozen at an average level taken from the previous twelve months and corrected according to the URP for the month by 26.05 per cent. Thereafter, there would be some increase in salaries below the average level of the last twelve months, but salaries would not go up during the period of the freeze, after which collective bargaining and other strategies would have to create a new formula.²⁶

The Summer Plan was largely influenced by conservative, 'orthodox' economists of the old military-backed régime. These included Octávio Gouvêa Bulhões, Minister of Finance in the Castello Branco government after 1964, who was virtually the father of indexation in Brazil, and Mário Henrique Simonsen, Finance Minister under Geisel and Minister of Planning under Figueiredo, who previously had scorned the idea of collective bargaining, compared with a neat, mathematical formula for determining wage increases.

Unlike the Cruzado Plan of 1986, which had been known only to a handful of people, this new package, like the Bresser Plan of 1987, had been widely forecast and even discussed in detail. Again like the Bresser Plan, it had also been preceded by a scramble to put up prices before the freeze even if these might later be reduced to more rational levels in so-called 'promotions' or special offers. This gave a major impetus to inflation, which in January 1989 rose to over 60 per cent for the month.

In expressing his guarded hopes concerning hyperinflation and the November 1989 elections, Bresser Pereira was evidently aware that the new package was coming. The chief question [at the time of writing this article - March 1989] is how far the Summer Plan seems to be succeeding, and what its impact on the November elections might be and the chance of some kind of fresh start.

The prospects are not encouraging. Within a week of its announcement, there were reports that prices were still rising, especially in areas where they had not increased immediately before the Plan's launch.²⁷ There were questions, too, about the sincerity of the government's aim to dismiss many civil servants, and its tactic of trying to pass the responsibility on to Congress. This, it was argued, ensured that the dis-

²⁶ See *Veja*, 25 January 1989, p 25 and *Istoé Senhor*, 25 January 1989, pp 38-41. For closer analysis of the Cruzado Plan see P Flynn, 'Brazil: the politics of the Cruzado Plan', *Third World Quarterly* 8 (4), October 1986, pp 1151-94.

²⁷ *Istoé Senhor*, 25 January 1989, pp 24-8. The THASE report, among others, remarked on how the government had given enough warning of its intentions to allow prices to be put up.

missals would never take place, because of the susceptibility of Congress to lobby pressure. Already, too, there were signs of resistance from the banks and the financial sector, severely hit by the end of the OTN, which had been the indexing basis for financial operations, and its replacement by the *Letras Financeiras do Tesouro* (treasury bills, LFT). This alone was expected to cost the financial sector NCz\$30 million. The end of monetary correction reduced their income from the *Certificados de Depósitos Bancários* (certificates of deposit, CDB) by an estimated NCz\$2.04 billion. In short, the bankers who had previously made rich profits from inflation and monetary correction were now set to lose their advantage.

The trade unions, both in the CUT and the CGT were also organising their resistance by planning strike action, demonstrations and pressure on Congress (in the case of the dismissal of civil servants, Congress had to approve the *Medida Provisória* sent to it by the executive). There was disagreement over how badly the Plan would affect wages, since there would be indexation during the initial period of price freezes in January; but the general union reaction was one of suspicion and hostility, even among those who had recently negotiated the 'social pact'.

The government hoped that the new Minister of Labour, Dorothea Werneck, who had previously been closely involved in the 'pact', would be able to negotiate the new package successfully with the unions, especially the CUT.²⁸ In late January 1989, while Sarney was away in Angola, Ulysses Guimarães had to conduct negotiations in Congress over the wages sections of the Plan, resulting in some concessions over further adjustments in March, April and May 1989. This was less than the unions wanted, but still enough to cause concern to Mailson de Nóbrega, who was afraid that the Plan might fail to secure congressional sanction within the required thirty days.²⁹ Other strains were also appearing: Congress returned the decree dismissing 90,000 civil servants to Sarney and vetoed the proposal to close or privatise state-owned entities, saying that nothing could be decided until the wage issue was solved.

Another fear concerned the supply of goods to the shops, so that

²⁸ On the new ministers see *Veja*, 18 January 1989, pp 32-6, and, especially on Dorothea Furquim Werneck, p 35. She is an able economist, with a doctorate from Boston College, who previously worked with IPEA (Institute for Economic Research and Analysis). See also *ibid.*, 25 January 1989, pp 18-26 (again on the wages issue), and *Istoé Senhor*, 25 January 1989, especially the article on Dorothea Werneck, p 49.

²⁹ *Istoé Senhor*, 1 February 1989, pp 74-5. Mailson warned that if the Plan were knocked off course the country would be plunged into chaos, and he would have to go.

police and others were ordered to monitor prices and supplies across the country. Most of those caught breaching the Plan were small fry (numbering about 9,000 in the first seventeen days), but then the president of Brazil's second biggest supermarket chain, Carrefour, was called to account by the federal police for charging 10 centavos above the fixed price for toilet paper in one of his stores. Even more astonishing, Abílio Diniz, the owner of the biggest supermarket chain of all (the Pão de Açúcar group), was charged with holding back supplies of tins of soya oil, when he had an estimated 3.8 million tins in his warehouses. Diniz dismissed the charges before a television audience of 30 million, but the government took the matter seriously.³⁰

A month into the new Plan, Sarney claimed that it was going well and that hyperinflation was being contained. Others disagreed, pointing to continuing price rises, a rate of inflation which still promised to be disconcerting in February 1989, and a widening gap between the official and black market rates for the dollar.³¹ There was also increasing criticism from the business community, which saw itself as a scapegoat, and persistent resistance from Congress. Businessmen were becoming increasingly opposed to the price freeze, while the unions planned a major strike for mid-March 1989.

Economists and other observers insisted that the Plan alone was insufficient, and that rigorous monetary and fiscal reform and severe reduction of the public deficit were needed. That further, more far-reaching, measures were needed was also the conclusion of one of the conservative economists credited with shaping the Summer Plan, Mário Henrique Simonsen. He argued that the Plan and price freeze could only be of major help if used to tackle the deficit. He was critical of some aspects of the Plan, but thought its success, which could not be judged until March or April 1989, depended on the government.³²

There is a real fear that if the Summer Plan does not work, and there is clumsy handling of the unfreezing of prices, a spiral of price rises may be unleashed even more dramatic than that which accompanied the dismantling of the Cruzado Plan.

The immediate conclusion must be that more radical treatment is

³⁰ See *Veja*, 8 February 1989, pp 18-24. Among those asked to give evidence was Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira (as a director of *Pão de Açúcar*). There was a serious possibility that the incident might deprive Abílio Diniz of his seat on the Conselho Monetário Nacional (CMN). Also see *Veja*, 15 February 1989, p 37 and *Istoé Senhor*, 15 February, pp 82-4 on price rises.

³¹ By 18 January the black (or parallel) market dollar closed at 1.77 new cruzados, a rise of 18 per cent in three weeks. *Veja*, 15 February 1989, p 82.

³² *Istoé Senhor*, 15 February 1989, pp 5-8.

needed to solve Brazil's basic economic problems. At best, the Plan has bought time until a full-blooded assault can be made. This would require more conviction and popular support than may be expected from the Sarney government: but this political breathing space is important.

By the end of 1988, there was a real fear of hyperinflation, which still has not gone away. Despite Sarney's regular warnings that the country was becoming ungovernable, there was less fear of impending military intervention, though few people were willing to rule it out under certain extreme circumstances.³³ Occasionally there were scares³⁴ and rumours, often irresponsibly started for immediate political advantage,³⁵ and no one doubted the strength of the military or its influence on the Sarney government, which was demonstrated by the impunity with which the armed forces acted in Volta Redonda.³⁶ This was, in fact, one good reason not to expect a coup: the armed forces already exercised much indirect control, without having to bear the opprobrium and responsibility themselves.

Hyperinflation was one of the extreme situations of which it was believed that military intervention might be the result. The other less immediately threatening situation was that of severe social dislocation, as might be produced by waves of strikes of such severity that they threatened to paralyse the country. The first set of worries was expressed by Bresser Pereira and others on the left, when they said that the main aim had to be to reach the November 1989 elections safely. It is not over-optimistic to suggest that in spite of its inadequacies, the Summer Plan may have guaranteed that the country will muddle through until then, to give a new president and ministerial team a chance; the Plan has partly made up for the disaster of Sarney's fifth year.

The outlook is less sanguine from the vantage point of Sarney and his supporters. In so far as it was a response to the 1988 elections,

³³ See, for instance, the interview with Raymundo Faoro in *Istoé Senhor*, 4 January 1989, pp 5-9, where he sees military intervention as 'the ultimate hypothesis', but cannot exclude it.

³⁴ Ulysses Guimarães caused a stir in December 1988 as reported in *Folha de São Paulo*, referring to the need for cooperation on the left, 'otherwise Leônidas takes over'. Though widely commented on, this was generally seen as using the categories of the past somewhat irresponsibly, to apply political pressure on his own ranks. See *Istoé Senhor*, 7 December 1988, p 28.

³⁵ These ran swiftly round Brasília and across the country after Sarney's interview, in *O Estado de São Paulo* in early December, warning about totalitarianism. Ulysses Guimarães was also quoted as saying of the 'social pact': 'The pact is a life-raft. Either the pact, or chaos, military intervention.' *Istoé Senhor*, 14 December 1988, p 24.

³⁶ One of the most outrageous examples of this was the announcement that, evidently with the approval of General Leônidas, the officers who took part in the attack and killings in Volta Redonda had been decorated. The strike was compared to a guerrilla operation. The whole affair was sheer provocation, *ibid.*, 1 March 1989, p 23.

the Summer Plan was only the latest in a series of devices to stem the challenge to interests dominant in Brazil since the coup in 1964. They had tried to control the slow, gradual and secure opening of the political system since 1974. They have managed to slow down the return to democracy (witness, for example, their recent manipulation of the Constituent Assembly and extension of Sarney's term), but they have not been able to stop it. Brazil has a new constitution and the November 1988 elections have issued a clear message: the people have voted for change. They have had more than enough of political manipulation, whether under the military-backed regime or under the New Republic. They now want to vote for their president.

The presidential election

The fight for the presidency is now on, and it is going to be hard (see Appendix). At the start of 1989 Brizola and Lula had a clear lead: a Gallup poll gave Brizola 13.6 per cent and Lula 8.7 per cent. If they could reach an agreement, and maintain it, a victory for the left seemed to be guaranteed. Otherwise, as César Maia, Federal Deputy for the PDT, warned in January, a challenge could be expected from a carefully chosen centre candidate, backed by the government machine. Maia believed that either Brizola or Lula could get through to the second round, but not both.³⁷ At present, it seems likely that Lula may be a more popular candidate, but less credible and viable in the longer term.

One evident problem is how well Brizola and Lula can cooperate. Already there are signs of renewed strain.³⁸ Meanwhile, the centre and right candidates are beginning to organise their response to the set-back suffered in November 1988. On 10 February 1989 the Movimento de Convergência Democrática (MCD) appeared, seeking to 'reunite and unite politicians, businessmen, and members of the armed forces . . . to build a genuine democracy'.³⁹ The first to sign was Octávio Gouvêa Bulhões and it was widely believed that the Movement had the support, if not the signature, of former president, Ernesto Geisel. This is a rallying cry to the right to find a candidate: the finance and support are already guaranteed.

Now we must wait and see. Most candidates have been declared already. They include some surprises and incalculable elements. Debate currently

³⁷ *Istoé Senhor*, 11 January 1989, p. 21.

³⁸ *Veja*, 1 February 1989, p. 32. *Istoé Senhor*, 15 February 1989, pp. 41-2.

³⁹ See *Istoé Senhor*, 15 February 1989, p. 36. The disjunction 'to reunite and unite' is worth noting, calling on new representatives of the right to join with the old.

turns on the problems of finding candidates of sufficient weight for the centre and right parties. General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves will become a candidate in May for the Partido Democrata Cristão (PDC).⁴⁰ Caiado is a candidate, but has not yet decided with which party he will be associated.⁴¹

Sarney's son, the Federal Deputy, José Sarney Filho, has said that he will support Brizola, and the state governor, Eptácio Cafeteira, has offered to back him with 'up to one million votes from Maranhão, provided he agrees to respect the interests of the state'. These interests include the deeply controversial north-south railway, the Carajás mining project and the establishment of a special export zone in Maranhão. For Sarney's son, Brizola is 'without doubt, the candidate with most chance of winning'. As he puts it, with unengaging frankness: 'Everyone knows that political ideology doesn't work in this country. Deals have to be carried out in accordance with the interests of each state.'⁴²

Here speaks the authentic voice of the politics of bargaining, compromise, 'delivering' votes and stitching up elections. It evidently reflects not just the current political calculus, but a growing perception among the controlling classes (*classes dirigentes*) that Brizola may be the best candidate to stop a further, and in their view even more dangerous, shift to the left: he may be the 'candidate of conciliation'. How Brizola will react to such pressures remains to be seen. He needs to broaden his basis of support, but there must be limits to compromise, as he well knows, and as the results of last November's elections clearly show.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Veja*, 15 February 1989.

⁴¹ *Folha de São Paulo*, 18 February 1989.

⁴² *Folha de São Paulo*, 18 February 1989, p. 4. Another report says that Sarney, too, thinks that Brizola is the strongest candidate, who has had most time to prepare himself for the exercise of power.

⁴³ Bresser Pereira touches on a related point, while also making the distinction between *classe dominante* and *classes dirigentes*. He says that the business community, broadly understood, has a power of veto over '... candidates too much to the left. It will be difficult for Lula to be elected, because he goes against, in a very direct form, the interests and basic values of Brazilian bourgeois society ... Once elected, the new president will only be able to govern if he may count on a certain degree of support from the bourgeoisie'. *Istoé Senhor*, 1 March 1989, p. 83. Bresser does not say so, but he almost certainly has in mind Mão Covas, a fellow 'Tucano', as someone who can win this support. In the case of Lula, a good deal, of course, will depend on his choice of vice-presidential candidate. Current speculation favours Fernando Gabeira, a former guerrilla and now leader of the Partido Verde (the Green Party). This choice would reinforce the left-wing image, as would that of Father Leonardo Boff, the Franciscan writer on the 'theology of liberation'. A third possibility, Raymundo Faoro, would represent an appeal for wider backing.

Appendix

This note on the *presidenciáveis*, the possible presidential candidates for the elections in November 1989, is intended to supplement the text, where other candidates are discussed.

Ulysses Guimarães

The set-back to the PMDB in the November 1988 elections must damage the prospects of its president and most senior figure, Ulysses Guimarães, even further. He has had a distinguished career, marked by his firm resistance to the military regime and by his struggle to guarantee the safe transition to fuller democracy and the new constitution. Even before the elections, there were searching questions being asked regarding his age, his health and his durability. It was suggested that it might be difficult to choose any candidate other than Ulysses if the nomination were to be decided in the Party Convention. In a form of primary elections, however, the candidature might go to Orestes Quércia, governor of São Paulo. Close attention would have to be paid to the choice of vice-presidential candidate.

The municipal elections have brought a new urgency to the PMDB's search for a credible, energetic centre or centre-left candidate. He must be able to counter the popular support for the PT and Lula, Brizola's television success, and be someone who can appeal to young voters, who now can vote at the age of sixteen. On none of these counts does Ulysses score highly.

Orestes Quércia

As PMDB governor of São Paulo, Quércia had to be regarded as a serious candidate before November 1988. He has, however, been a divisive figure within the PMDB, especially in São Paulo. His backing of João Oswaldo Leiva, as mayoral candidate in the election of November 1988, helped to speed up the split within the PMDB. A further query is whether Quércia would want to risk giving up the powerful and lucrative position of governor of São Paulo (which has almost two years to run), in order to risk an election, which, increasingly, he cannot be guaranteed to win. He must make a decision by 15 May 1989. Tancredo Neves gave up the long coveted governorship of Minas Gerais, but his indirect election, in January 1985, was guaranteed by the entrepreneurs and political elites. 1989 is a different case, as Quércia knows.

Mário Covas

As leader of the Tucanos, with strong backing in São Paulo and in Congress, Senator Mário Covas could become a strong, credible centre-party candidate. He is widely respected among the business and middle classes, yet with a wider-ranging appeal which could allow him to be presented as a viable alternative to Brizola or Lula. A searching question is how far the Tucano party can spread the high profile they have in São Paulo across Brazil before November 1989.

Jânio Quadros

He is always the scarcely credible candidate who then wins elections. In the immediate aftermath of the November 1988 polls, he began to present himself, with feigned reluctance, as a possible saviour of the nation from left-wing extremism. He has long been considered the most likely right-wing 'populist' opponent to Brizola, should politics become strongly polarised. Despite his idiosyncratic image, he is probably the strongest candidate of the right, and is also the last man to be directly elected president of Brazil, in 1960.

Jarbas Passarinho

As leader of the PDS he is not generally spoken of as a leading candidate, but he could draw votes on the centre-right of the spectrum as an able politician, who, among other things, can match Brizola's television performances. One marked disadvantage is his close association with the previous military-backed regime, including Institutional Act No 5 of 13 December 1968 which introduced the worst features of military repression. He could be a strong vice-presidential candidate, with Jânio Quadros.

Ronaldo Caiado

Caiado's UDR support is strong and he also has a base in the business and industrial community. He still has not decided which party he wants to be associated with, but he could emerge as a strong right-wing candidate. He claims UDR support in about 1,000 of the 4,307 *municípios* of Brazil and believes that left-wing successes in the November 1988 elections have strengthened his hand.

General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves

He has been emerging as a possible candidate who could find support on the right. However, his reputation has been hurt by the killings in Volta Redonda and by his close association with the Sarney government, including the extension of Sarney's term, and he will need to make up these losses. One way to do this may be to take up the always powerful, and too often underestimated, call of right-wing nationalism, with its strong appeal to the armed forces, but also to a much wider constituency.

One area in which he could do this is by leading the right-wing nationalist reaction in the debate over the destruction of the rain forest in Amazônia. International pressure, however justified, runs the risk of provoking a backlash in Brazil, which could allow Sarney to distract attention from his pressing domestic problems. It might also have the effect of uniting the vested interests of mining companies, those set to profit from the huge hydroelectric schemes, and the cattle growers and new settlers in Amazônia. General Pires Gonçalves could be the presidential spokesman for these interests, perhaps allying with Caiado and the UDR. The strength and resilience of the right should never be underestimated in Brazil, as witnessed by the PFL vote in the interior in November 1988.

Lula

Following the result of between 7 and 8 million votes for the PT in the November 1988 elections (or about 10 per cent of the total), at first sight Lula is the strongest single candidate, apparently replacing Brizola as the most favoured candidate of the left. This at once suggests that a combination of the support for Lula and Brizola in the second round of voting (should any one candidate not win a majority in the first round) would be unstoppable. In particular, were Brizola to be the final candidate, Lula could provide for him the São Paulo support which he sorely needs.

Whether Lula, on his own terms, could be an equally successful candidate of the left is more open to doubt, despite his current attempts—as, for instance, on his European tour—to present himself as a seasoned left-wing politician. There is also the question, not least in the wake of the November 1988 elections, of how acceptable Lula would be to the business community and the armed forces, who still, if informally, keep a watching brief.

Brizola

Brizola has been 'cultivating his bases' at least since 1982, seeking to reassure both the business community and leadership of the armed forces that he is not the bogey-man many of them once thought, but someone with whom they can coexist, work, and even prosper. One of the more striking features of the country's return to democratic government has been a series of pacts and deals, exemplified by Tancredo Neves, the archetypal candidate of 'conciliation'. One cause of a furious row between Lula and Brizola was Lula's comment that Brizola would step on his mother's neck to reach the presidency, a remark which stung all the more sharply, since Brizola had shown a readiness to make alliances with the PDS, the PFL, and with parties of the right, the left and the centre (as, to a degree, he had to do, when the PDT still lacked a national structure). Brizola may come to be seen as the most effective candidate of conciliation in the long process of *distensão* (relaxation) and *abertura* (opening).

Paradoxically, the success of the left in November 1988 may have strengthened this possibility. With the spectre of Lula and the PT on the left (though by comparative international standards they are reformist rather than notably left-wing), the political elites of Brazil may well come to see Brizola as a more acceptable ally to be incorporated into a system which must give way to limited change. Above all, he may come to be seen as the man who can best deliver the much sought after 'social pact'. Whether they can really ride the tiger is another question, but an electoral alliance of Brizola and the centre-left (with Covas, for example) could make electoral sense, especially in harnessing São Paulo. In whatever circumstances, Brizola urgently needs to build up his political base in São Paulo and in Minas Gerais, without which the presidency will elude him. He is strong in Rio de Janeiro, the south and the northeast; but one must remember that 35 million of the Brazilian electorate live in Minas Gerais and São Paulo.

Defunding Latin America: reverse transfers by the multilateral lending agencies

The international financial institutions (IFIs) must address two key issues as they confront the debt and development problems of Latin America. Both issues centre on the urgent need to reduce the transfer of resources (approximately \$20 billion each year) from Latin America to the international financial system:¹ first, whether the IFIs can reverse the disturbing trend of joining the commercial banks as net financial drains on the capital-short region; and second, what role they should play in reducing the persistent transfer of financial resources from Latin America to private lenders.

Both these issues are central to the basic agenda of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank,² and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). These institutions were established in part to transfer capital from North to South (for the IMF such transfers are 'temporary', until a balance-of-payments problem has been resolved), and to catalyse the movement of private capital to profitable investments in developing nations. The challenge facing the IFIs in the 1990s is to fulfil these aims in the face of new and difficult circumstances.

Trends in IFI resource transfers

The transfer of wealth from North to South makes sense on both economic and moral grounds. The rates of return should be higher in capital-poor nations, but private investors may hesitate to commit their capital because of perceptions of high risk: therefore public institutions must step in. At the same time, raising living standards in the Third

An earlier version of this article was presented at a conference at the Jerome Levy Economics Institute in October 1988.

¹ UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean*, 1987, *advance summary*, April 1988, table 16, p 45.

² The term World Bank will be used here as synonymous to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the hard-loan window of the World Bank Group, also composed of the soft-loan International Development Association (IDA) which does little business in Latin America, and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which promotes private investment.

World is a humanitarian act, which generally serves the commercial and security interests of the USA by widening markets for US products, strengthening market mechanisms and promoting political moderation. These statements are uncontroversial and explain why the IFIs have generally enjoyed bipartisan backing.

But the IFIs are no longer serving this basic purpose. In 1987, for the first time, all three IFIs drained more money out of Latin America than they put in. The combined net resource transfer (NRT)—disbursements minus principal and interest repayments—was a negative \$2.5 billion (table 1). The IMF received nearly \$2 billion in net transfers, the World Bank \$800 million, and the IDB just \$100 million. Most important, this reverse capital transfer is not a momentary blip, but rather the result of underlying trends that, if not altered, will produce similar outcomes into the 1990s. Under current policies, and even assuming the approval of capital injections and subsequent substantial increases in annual loan commitments by the World Bank and the IDB, the negative net resource transfer will persist at least throughout 1991 (table 1).

1987 was a turning point in financial relations between the IFIs and Latin America. From being a significant source of financial resources, the multilateral lending agencies became a net drain on the region's balance of payments. Earlier in the decade, in the wake of the debt crisis and the halt in private lending, the IFIs sharply increased their disbursements, causing the combined NRT to leap from under \$3 billion in 1982 to over \$13 billion during 1983 and 1984. All three institutions contributed to this effort to pump funds into the region. In 1986, however, the IMF began to show a negative NRT, which pushed the combined effort down to under \$1 billion. In 1987 all three IFIs turned in a negative performance, which was repeated in 1988.

The main causes of this negative trend are the same for all three institutions: amortisation and interest charges on outstanding debt shot up from a combined \$2 billion in 1980 to \$10 billion in 1987 (table 2). For example, as a result of loans made earlier in the decade to Latin America, annual repayments to the IMF jumped from around \$200 million in 1982-84 to \$1.9 billion in 1986, and to \$3.3 billion in 1987 (table 2). Charges (including interest and commitment fees), which were nominal in the early 1980s, reached \$1 billion per annum from 1985-87. (The IMF periodically adjusts its interest charges, which floated around 7 per cent in 1986, but fell to around 6 per cent by 1988.) These charges will decline as loans are amortised, but of course the amortisation payments greatly exceed the interest savings.

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Table 1
The IFIs net resource transfer to Latin America, 1980-91 (\$ billions)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988 ^a	1989 ^b	1990 ^b	1991 ^b
IMF	-0.2	-0.3	1.7	6.4	3.0	0.4	-1.0	-2.0	-0.6	-0.6	-	-
IBRD	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.1	0.8	1.3	-0.5	-0.8	-1.0	-1.5	-2.0
IDB	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.2	0.9	0.5	-0.1	-0.5	-0.3	-0.2	0.2
Total ^c	0.9	0.8	2.9	7.9	5.3	2.1	0.8	-2.5	-1.9	-1.9	-1.7	-1.8 ^d

^a Estimates

^b Projections

^c Excludes the IMF

^d Totals may not add due to rounding

Sources: For the IMF, *World Economic Outlook*, April 1988 and September 1988, and *International Financial Statistics*, July 1988; for the World Bank, *World Debt Tables* (1987-88) and by communication; for the IDB, Annual Report 1986 and by communication; and author's calculations.

World Bank estimates include the recent GCI. IDB estimates assume agreement on the seventh replenishment, commitment levels of \$4 billion in 1989 and \$6 billion in 1990 and 1991, and traditional disbursement schedules.

Table 2
The rapid rise in Latin American debt service to the IFIs (\$ billions)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
IMF								
Amortisation	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	1.9	3.3
Interest	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.1	1.1
World Bank								
Amortisation	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.2	1.8	2.3
Interest	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.7	2.0
IDB								
Amortisation	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.7
Interest	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.1
Total	2.2	2.3	2.5	3.1	4.1	4.9	8.1	10.5

Sources: Same as for table 1.

World Bank principal repayments have been rising at an accelerating rate during the 1980s, from \$398 million in 1980 to \$2.3 billion in 1987 (table 2). Under current Bank policy assumptions, repayment requirements will reach \$3.8 billion by 1991. Interest payments have also increased, reflecting the Bank's decision to adjust its rates (fixed at 7.6 per cent as of September 1988) in order to cover the cost of funds and the growth of the region's outstanding disbursed debt from \$7.7 billion in 1980 to \$18.7 billion in 1986.

Similarly, IDB repayments have risen from \$260 million in 1980 to \$712 million in 1987, and are projected to reach \$1.5 billion in 1991

(table 2). Interest and other charges have risen from \$330 million to \$1.1 billion.

For all three agencies, disbursements have not kept pace with repayments. After the surge in lending in 1983–84, IMF disbursements have actually declined. Reflecting a stagnation in commitment levels, IDB disbursements are lower today than in 1984. In contrast, the World Bank more than doubled its disbursements from 1981/82–1986/87, but the increase was still insufficient to compensate for the rise in repayments and interest. Even with the general capital increase (GCI), the World Bank's NRT will remain negative if the Bank adheres to its stated intentions of increasing commitment levels by only 10 per cent per annum over the next five or six years—to about \$20 billion in the early 1990s.

Theoretically, a net positive inflow could be a sign of success for the IFIs. For the IMF, it could signal that member states had successfully restored equilibrium to their balance of payments. For the development agencies, it could mean that borrowers had reached that stage of rapid, sustained growth where they are ready to graduate from dependency on official finance and are capable of relying on private capital markets for their external financial needs. Alas, neither is a true picture of Latin America today. The region's external accounts are under severe strain and Latin America has lost access to private capital markets.

At some point, lenders inevitably experience net reflows. The inflection point is reached more quickly when interest rates are high, as they have been during the 1980s. But this emergence of a negative NRT vis-à-vis the IFIs comes at a most inopportune time for Latin America. Public capital is needed to offset the sudden and dramatic withdrawal of private lenders and investors. A positive public inflow is particularly critical at a time when many Latin American nations are attempting ambitious adjustment programmes that require high rates of investment. Monies are needed for the modern plants and equipment whose output will be competitive on world markets. The IFIs themselves are strong advocates of this investment-intensive adjustment strategy. However, the negative NRT undermines the very policies that they advocate and threatens to frustrate the region's efforts at structural adjustment.

Improving IFI performance

There are two basic ways to correct the financial performance of the IFIs: increasing the disbursement rate and altering the amortisation

schedule. It would not be advisable for the IFIs to lower their interest charges significantly unless their cost of funds falls; on the contrary, the IFIs need an income stream sufficient to compensate for the rising volume of loans on non-accrual status. I shall first consider the disbursement options open to each institution.

The International Monetary Fund

The IMF has considerable resources to lend to Latin America as it is by no means facing a liquidity crisis.³ It holds over \$40 billion in unused loanable hard currencies, about \$40 billion in gold valued at current market prices, and lines of credit from several capital-surplus nations. In addition, the IMF could seek to activate the General Arrangements to Borrow (GAB), a pool of funds that industrial countries can make available to the IMF to support major debtor nations, among other functions. Alternatively, the IMF Board could decide to create more of its own money, or Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), as most members have advocated, and industrial countries could agree to provide a disproportionate share of the SDR issue for developing nations. While such generosity would be financially equivalent to a loan or grant, it could be engineered outside normal national budgetary processes and therefore be less taxing politically for the governments of industrialised countries.

The IMF maintains that it does not have this kind of leeway—that it needs to husband its liquidity to cover potential borrowings by industrialised countries. However, no industrialised country has borrowed from the IMF for over a decade. In reality such nations, when in need of finance, have alternatives to the IMF, including the greatly expanded private capital markets and swap arrangements among their own central banks.

The IMF management wants an increase of 100 per cent in its basic resources or quotas, equal to about SDR \$90 billion. It wanted action in 1988, but the US government preferred to wait until the World Bank's capital increase passed through Congress. The IMF argues that its resources need to be doubled to keep pace with the growth in international capital markets and world trade, and to be able to increase lending levels to developing nations. This case would be more persuasive

³ For a fuller discussion, see R E Feinberg and E Bucha, 'When supply and demand don't intersect: Latin America and the Bretton Woods institutions in the 1980s', *Development and Change* 19, 1988.

if the IMF were making better use of its existing resources and capabilities.⁴

The World Bank

The approval of a \$75 billion GCI in 1988 gives the World Bank the means to increase disbursements sharply. The Bank also has a vehicle for rapid disbursement—its structural adjustment loans (SALS), which provide balance-of-payments support for agreed reforms.

Structural adjustment loans can include broad macroeconomic variables, or can focus more narrowly on particular sectors. Sector loans, which have been more common in Latin America, typically pursue such reforms as trade liberalisation, reorganisation of state-owned enterprises, reform of financial markets, and agricultural taxation and pricing policies. Structural adjustment loans account for about one quarter of Bank lending. The apparent ceiling of \$500 million per loan is arbitrary, and reflects political pressures coming from the Bank's executive directors rather than a calculation of what is needed to make the programme work economically. The Bank's ability to persuade countries to undertake politically risky reforms would also be enhanced if it could put up more money. There is no good reason why strong adjustment programmes, which require massive investment and sustained political support, should not receive more substantial external assistance.

The Inter-American Development Bank

The IDB's search for new capital resources was stalled for two years by its conflict with the Reagan administration, and by an inability to disburse all of its existing resources because recipient governments cannot provide the necessary counterpart funds. In the hope of attaining a \$20–25 billion increase in lending capacity that would permit a near doubling of loan commitments, the IDB management has already acceded to US demands that 20–25 per cent of resources be used for policy-based lending and that hand-picked US personnel be placed in key policy positions. The major Latin American nations drew the line, however, at the US insistence that it be given a virtual veto power over individual loans. The US position revealed unwarranted insecurity and distrust—it already enjoys substantial power to block loans. Moreover, the IDB had acceded to the USA's main substantive demands, and many

⁴ In March 1989, US Secretary of the Treasury, Nicholas Brady, indicated that the USA would relax its opposition to a quota increase if the IMF makes a greater contribution to the alleviation of the Third World debt problem.

Latin American governments are now ready and willing to undertake structural reforms. A complex compromise on voting procedures was finally hammered out in March 1989, and the IDB secured a \$26.5 billion capital increase.

The IDB's other major financial problem stems from the inability of financially-strapped recipient governments to provide the required counterpart funds. The result is \$10 billion in committed but undisbursed project loans. These funds could be put to use through temporary relaxation of counterpart requirements and the initiation of policy-based loans, which would not be tied to specific investment projects and therefore would require no counterpart funds.

Amortisation schedules

All three institutions have resisted participation in the Paris Club, where official, bilateral debts are rescheduled in order to protect their preferred creditor positions. This posture, however, does not rule out alternative approaches to grappling with the problem of rising repayments. For example, the IMF has lengthened the repayment period for the more ambitious stand-bys ('extended fund facilities') from 5-7 years to 5-10 years. It could strengthen this reform initiative by introducing contingency clauses that would allow for slower repayments in the event of adverse shocks, just as current agreements call for accelerated repayments in the event of good fortune. Furthermore, the IMF could transform past stand-by arrangements retroactively into extended arrangements, thereby stretching out amortisation schedules.⁵

Recognising the mounting repayment problem, the World Bank temporarily extended the grace period on new loans to middle-income countries from 3 to 5 years, and approved an annuity scheme for low-income borrowers (those with per capita incomes below \$836 in 1986) that will reduce repayment burdens in the earlier years of a loan. The World Bank could go further by significantly lengthening grace periods on existing as well as new loans. Such retroactive terms adjustment would be justifiable on several grounds. First, borrowers' economic conditions have deteriorated sharply, creating circumstances not envisioned when loan agreements were originally structured. Second, the IFIs are finding that structural adjustment programmes often take longer to yield results than was anticipated when the programmes began. Third, the external payments crisis facing debtor nations warrants

⁵ I am indebted to Jacques J Polak for suggesting this idea.

adjustment by all creditors. The simple doubling of the current five-year grace period by the World Bank would immediately affect repayment on the \$8 billion in disbursements made to Latin America from 1980-84, and would eventually delay amortisation on the \$16 billion in disbursements made from 1985-88. The result would be an annual saving for Latin America of about \$700 million in 1990, rising to \$1.7 billion by 1993. These reforms would, however, cause the Bank to hit the lending ceilings fixed by the recent GCI before 1998, as currently anticipated.

The fear at the Bank that such retroactive terms adjustment might injure its credit rating is unwarranted. If implemented as a final, unilateral action, it would not pull the Bank into the troublesome reschedulings that bilateral and private creditors are enmeshed in. Moreover, the World Bank's credit rating on private markets is more a function of the guarantees of the major industrialised-country governments than of the quality of the Bank's portfolio.⁶

The new vision

In sum, there are plenty of options available to enable the IFIs once again to provide resources for Latin America. Rather than the projected negative NRT of approximately \$3 billion, the IFIs could manage a positive NRT of some \$5-6 billion by around 1991 (table 3). Most significantly, this transformation could be accomplished without additional resources beyond the proposed IDB replenishment, although a quota increase for the IMF would make it easier for the monetary authority to boost lending while maintaining large liquid reserves.

The IMF could achieve an increase in disbursements of about \$2 billion by either permitting greater access to its existing resources or by issuing SDRs; it could raise this sum by another \$2 billion through a quota increase. The World Bank could increase disbursements by \$2 billion, by doubling the size of those structural adjustment loans likely to be signed under existing policies, and reducing repayments by \$1.1 billion through the retroactive terms adjustment discussed above. The IDB could double its annual commitments to \$6 billion, and devote one-quarter of this sum to fast-disbursing policy-based loans through the contemplated seventh replenishment; within two years, this faster payout rate could increase disbursements by an estimated \$1.2 billion. Faster utilisation of the IDB's pipeline—clogged up by the counterpart funds

⁶ This point is forcefully argued in C. Blitzer, 'Financing the World Bank', in R. F. Feinberg (ed.), *Between Two Worlds: the World Bank's next decade*, Washington DC: Overseas Development Council/Transaction Books, 1986, pp. 135-60.

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Table 3
Potential IMF expansion to Latin America, circa 1991 (\$ billions)

	<i>Increase in disbursements</i>	<i>Net resource transfer</i>	
		<i>Current policy</i>	<i>Potential flows</i>
IMF	2.0 (existing resources or SDRs)		
	2.0 (quota increase)		
Subtotal	4.0	- 1	3
World Bank	2.0 (doubling structural adjustment loan (SAL) size)		
	1.1 (retroactive terms adjustment)		
Subtotal	3.1	- 2	1.1
IDB	1.2 (replenishment plus SALs)		
	0.5 (counterpart funds relaxation)		
Subtotal	1.7	0.2	1.9
Total	\$8.8	- \$2.8	\$6.0

Sources: Table 1 and author's estimates.

requirement—could inject an additional \$500 million. This \$8–9 billion improvement in the IFIs' combined net resource transfer would equal more than 40 per cent of the average annual resource drain that Latin America experienced from 1985–87.

Individual loans, of course, would still be made on a country-by-country basis, conditioned upon the design and implementation of necessary stabilisation and strong structural adjustment programmes. The international agencies have both a moral and financial right to condition their loans on the adoption of policies that will improve the welfare—and the future repayment capacity—of borrowing nations. Importantly, the offer of more resources would increase the power of the IFIs to promote such reforms, as well as the ability of borrowers to sustain reform programmes. The provision of more resources would also help to catalyse private capital flows to Latin America.⁷

Private financial markets

The heart of the resource transfer problem lies in the private credit markets. By lending heavily in the 1970s and early 1980s, and then

⁷ The important issues of policy reform and 'conditionality' are addressed in R F Feinberg, 'The changing relationship between the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund', *International Organization* 42 (3) summer 1988.

closing the credit windows after 1982 when global interest rates rose and loans became due, the banks first provided strongly positive, and then demanded strongly negative, resource transfers. The volume of resources involved—in both positive and negative phases—far surpasses the activities of the IFIs. In Latin America, net disbursements to the private credit markets alone swung from an annual average of positive \$42 billion in 1980–81 to a negative \$3 billion in 1986–87.^a

The Bretton Woods agencies have always viewed themselves as catalysts of private capital flows. In the short-term, IMF and World Bank programmes often seek to gather associated private flows to help finance stabilisation programmes and supplement development efforts. In the longer term, by promoting successful stabilisation efforts and more vigorous growth, they strive to promote additional private investment.

The debt crisis and the closely related resource transfer problem have heightened IFI attention to the private credit markets. Although the IFIs have only recently begun explicitly to use the resource transfer terminology, as soon as the debt crisis struck in 1982 they began to seek ways to reduce effectively the NRT from the debtor nations to the commercial banks. In particular, the IMF pressed commercial banks to cover a portion of interest payments falling due by participating in new money packages. More recently, the IFIs have begun to entertain methods for slicing the negative NRT by reducing the stock of outstanding private debt and therefore debt service.

As the debt and development malaise has persisted, the IFIs' interest in stemming the NRT to the private markets has grown. They are alarmed at the economic decline of their clients, annoyed that their own capital is 'roundtripping' to service the assets of other creditors, and fearful that their own rising exposures are becoming increasingly jeopardised. Particularly at the World Bank, many staff express fatigue at playing handmaiden to dispirited private banks.

New Lending

The IFIs have tried hard to catalyse new commercial bank lending through a variety of mechanisms. The IMF has sometimes conditioned its stand-bys on modest amounts of new lending by the commercial banks. This 'concerted lending' generated \$32 billion in private commitments in 1983–84, accounting for the bulk of new private lending to the

^a International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*, Washington DC: IMF, 1988, table A41, p 163.

major debtor nations.⁹ More recently, however, its persuasive powers have waned. Private bank commitments tied to IMF programmes declined to \$2.2 billion in 1985 and to negligible amounts in 1987, with the exception of one big money package for Mexico, and to zero throughout the first three-quarters of 1987, except for a \$2 billion commitment to Argentina. While predictions of the death of new money packages have proved to be premature, as the 1988 \$5.2 billion commercial bank commitment to Brazil suggests, it is increasingly difficult for the IMF to convince banks to increase their exposure in heavily-indebted nations.

The World Bank is now tentatively trying to step into the breach. With the support of the US Treasury, the Bank has used its guarantee authority sparingly based on two premises: that private banks should bear some of the risk; and that the Bank might as well make the loan itself since guarantees are billed 100 per cent against Bank lending capacity. It is a matter of debate as to whether the Bank's Articles of Agreement would have to be amended for a system to be adopted in which only a fraction of contingent liabilities are charged against total lending amounts.

The World Bank's efforts to draw in private capital through traditional cofinancing arrangements have largely failed, and it is now trying to persuade private creditors to participate in financial packages tied to economic reform programmes. It is arguing that the medium-term nature of its programmes offers comfort to banks beyond that gained by association with 12-18 month IMF stand-bys. In 1985 the commercial banks agreed to cofinance policy-based loans to Colombia and Chile, and more recently have agreed to participate in joint IMF-World Bank concerted lending packages to Mexico and Brazil, with some commercial bank disbursements contingent upon compliance with World Bank sector agreements. Nevertheless, most World Bank sector loans continue to be unaccompanied by private financing. The World Bank has yet to establish the mechanisms and procedures for ensuring that the commercial banks make significant contributions to most Bank-backed reform programmes.

Debt Service Reduction

In the light of the reluctance of commercial banks to increase their exposure, attention is increasingly turning to the option of reducing

⁹ International Monetary Fund, *International Capital Markets: developments and prospects*, Washington DC: IMF, January 1988, table 24, p 76.

debt service. The World Bank has been anxious to play a role in pioneering debt service reduction schemes, as has been IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, but the Reagan administration was a decisive restraint. The Bush administration, however, has made an about turn, and in March 1989 urged the World Bank and the IMF to use the financial and guarantee authorities to support debt reduction. Understandably, both institutions would shy away from any grand debt conversion scheme which left them, directly or indirectly, holding \$100 billion or more of Third World debt. As an alternative, the IFIs might participate in approaches such as these:

Buybacks

The IMF has already facilitated the Bolivian buyback of about half its commercial debts by administering funds provided by bilateral donors that were then used to purchase bank debts at 11 cents on the dollar. The IFIs might initiate a similar programme of their own, whereby they provide a portion of the financing for deep-discount buybacks that would increase a member nation's development prospects. For smaller debtors whose liabilities are selling on secondary markets at a small fraction of their face value, buybacks could significantly reduce scheduled debt service.

Guarantees-for-asset swaps

The IFIs could provide partial or full guarantees for financial instruments issued by debtor nations, that would buy back at a discount old debts owed to commercial banks. The problem with this option is that guarantees of the full stream of interest payments would eat deeply into IFI resources, while simple guarantees on the principal loan provide a weak inducement for the banks, as indicated by the disappointing response in early 1988 to the Mexican bond offer.

Interest guarantees

Guarantees of interest could take two forms. The IFIs could guarantee interest payments on new instruments that the debtors swapped at a discount for old debts. Alternatively, without altering the stock of debt, the IFIs could guarantee renegotiated, below-market interest payments for either the entire maturity or for 2-3 years on a rolling basis. If two years of 4.5 per cent interest payments were covered on \$250 billion in commercial bank debts owed by the highly-indebted developing nations, the guarantee ceiling would be \$22.5 billion. Any of these

mechanisms to reduce debt service could be tied to IFI-approved reform programmes that should, over the longer term, increase the value of the banks' remaining exposure. At the same time, so long as the mechanisms were to reduce significantly the immediate NRT to the commercial banks, they could be advanced as 'burdensharing' rather than a 'bank bailout'.

Net resource transfer reduction

As the central conceptual framework for a new attack on the debt problem, the IFIs could adopt a strategy of 'net resource transfer reduction'. The World Bank and the IMF could set country targets for new lending and debt restructuring that would leave enough capital in each developing country to permit adequate investment and growth. Reversing the current approach, debt strategy would be subordinate to growth objectives.

To implement this strategy, the IFIs would require the firm support of key member governments. But it is in the interests of the industrial countries to restore growth to Latin America, to reopen export markets and to help stabilise the region's democratic institutions. While an NRT reduction strategy might cause short-term pain among some banks, it also promises to increase the value of the banks' remaining assets.

It could be argued that the proposed strategy simply postpones the problem by piling new debts on old ones. Of course, to the extent that the negative NRT is slashed through debt reduction, the stock of debt would diminish. But even where new loans are made, it is to be hoped that the combination of enhanced capital availability and policy reform will improve national debt service capacity in the medium term. As a result of fiscal reform and export growth, Latin America could be in a stronger position to manage its debts and repay loans by the mid-1990s.

A NRT reduction strategy would require that debtors be treated on a strictly case-by-case approach. Some nations, such as Colombia and South Korea, have strong enough export performance and actual or prospective access to private capital markets to be able to meet interest obligations fully and reach growth targets. Other nations require an alleviation of debt service. Correspondingly, for some nations relief can be temporary, while for others more permanent debt reduction arrangements will be necessary.

Under this strategy, each creditor could choose for itself whether it

wished to provide new monies or receive less debt service, negotiating with each debtor the exact choice of financial instruments. A formula such as the present discounted value of each creditor's contribution could be used to measure rough equivalence. Whereas it is unreasonable to expect commercial banks to become a source of net capital in the foreseeable future, they would be called upon to reduce their receipt of net financial resources. At the same time, the IFIs would generally be expected to sustain positive transfers to nations undertaking reform programmes, at least until they resume growth.

A variation on this approach would be to establish the politically attractive and simple objective of a zero NRT for Latin America. If the current negative NRT is about \$20 billion, the IFIs and the commercial banks could divide this burden roughly between them. The IFIs would make their contribution of \$8-10 billion by transforming the projected \$3 billion drain into a positive \$6 billion net flow. The banks would reduce their net intake by about \$10-12 billion through country-by-country combinations of new lending and debt service reduction. The contribution of the IFIs would in effect be recycled to cover payments to the commercial banks, however now in the context of a more equal burdensharing and a new strategy supportive of the ultimate objectives of the international financial institutions: the growth of developing nations within a stable and expanding international economic system.

The Sino-Soviet future: some PRC perspectives

China's goals and strategies

The views of the PRC on the international environment in the last half of the 1980s have revealed an optimism about the prospects for peaceful change unprecedented since the Communist Party's rise to power. Relations with the superpowers and important regional actors, including Japan, South Korea, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), demonstrate confidence in Beijing's ability as a regional power, increasingly able to act independently of either friendly or adversarial great powers. This new strategic posture is based on two premises: that the USSR no longer poses an imminent military threat, and that by the late 1980s, the USA had regained sufficient military credibility in the western Pacific to discourage future Soviet actions inimical to Beijing's interests (for example, in the South China Sea). The Soviet inability to stabilise a client regime in Afghanistan, combined with Vietnam's failure to destroy the Resistance in Kampuchea despite massive Soviet military aid, has further enhanced China's self-confidence.

This article attempts to project the PRC's policies towards the USSR into the early 1990s and to assess the effects of Sino-Soviet relations on other major targets of PRC foreign policy, including the USA, Japan, and such important neighbours as Indochina and the Koreans. I shall focus primarily on the dimension of political security as it affects China's policy towards the USSR under Deng Xiaoping and the modernisers. This policy is seen as subordinate to and serving the ends of long-term domestic economic modernisation.

China's modernisation depends upon several international conditions: an overall peaceful environment within which the PRC can concentrate on rebuilding its economy; good relations with the major suppliers of advanced technology and capital (the OECD countries) to shape and accelerate economic growth; and at minimum, calm relations with

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primary symbol of US defence commitments in Asia helping to offset the USSR's air and naval forces in the Soviet Far East.⁶

Under Deng's leadership, post-Mao China has moved from autarchy to the unabashed embrace of interdependence.⁷ Following the logic of international liberalism, the PRC has embarked upon an open door economic policy. No longer is the world viewed in *dependencia* terms (by which the capitalist centres exploit the Third World). Rather, the escape from poverty is found by emulating the technological and industrial developments of the OECD countries and the NICs over the past twenty years. Nevertheless, tension between Deng's economic policies and his insistence on the pursuit of an independent foreign policy is palpable. Given China's historical dependency under Western colonialism as well as during the Soviet alliance period, it is difficult for many in the party leadership to believe that genuine independence can be retained by means of an open door economic policy. For these sceptics, the further growth of a US-Japanese military presence also undermines China's independent foreign policy.

Ambiguity in the Sino-Soviet relationship

Soviet long-term objectives, according to PRC analysts, include the breakup of US alliances in Asia, the closing of US bases, pushing the US presence out of the region, and ultimately becoming the dominant power.⁸ At the same time, PRC analysts believe that the USSR requires better relations with the PRC and the rest of Asia to reduce the region's felt need for a continued US presence. An integral component of this strategy of tension reduction with China was articulated in Gorbachev's July 1986 Vladivostok speech which portrayed the PRC and USSR as modernising socialist states whose comparative economic capacities can be used to assist one another. Improved relations between the two countries would permit both to reduce the economic burden of their armed confrontation. Détente in Soviet US relations, embodied in the

⁶ B M Blechman, 'Confidence-building in the North Pacific: a pragmatic approach to naval arms control', paper presented to the Australian National University Research School of Pacific Studies Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, 12-14 August 1987, p 12.

⁷ The argument for the remainder of this section is drawn extensively from S Kim, 'Foreign relations', in J S Major and A J Kane, *China Briefing*, 1987, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press for The Asia Society, New York, 1987, pp 69-98.

⁸ Bonnie Glaser's interviews with PRC defence analysts in her paper, 'Soviet, Chinese, and American perspectives on arms control in Northeast Asia', presented to The Australian National University Research School of Pacific Studies Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, 12-14 August 1987, p 20. Also see B Garrett and B Glaser, 'Chinese estimates of the US-Soviet balance of power', Washington DC: The Wilson Center, Asian Program, occasional paper 33, 1988.

1988 intermediate nuclear forces (INF) treaty, has actually made the normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations easier by reducing the danger that alarm bells would ring in Western capitals. Washington openly welcomed the Sino-Soviet dialogue when former Secretary of Defense, Carlucci, praised the relaxation of tensions as 'healthy for world peace and stability'.⁹

Gorbachev's push for peace fits neatly into Deng's development strategy. The latter's open door policy can also be extended to the Soviet bloc. Since the large majority of industrial plants in China were built with Soviet plans, their modernisation can be achieved with Soviet assistance. In effect, China is pursuing a dual-track modernisation programme: courting OECD investment for high technology and Soviet assistance for heavy industry. By 1988, the USSR had jumped to fifth place among China's trade partners, accounting for about 5 per cent of China's trade.¹⁰ The underdevelopment of Soviet consumer industries provides the PRC with a substantial market for light industrial products whose quality need not be competitive with world market standards.

The security aspect of Sino-Soviet relations is also characterised by reduced tension and calmer rhetoric. While underlying suspicion of Soviet forces and intentions persists, no direct confrontation with the USSR is seen on the horizon. The USSR continues to compete with the PRC for influence in North Korea and Southeast Asia; nor is there a diminution in the modernisation of the Soviet Pacific Fleet in the seas surrounding Northeast Asia. By contrast, the PRC has acknowledged Soviet resolution of the major obstacles in the path of normalisation: Gorbachev's November 1988 pledge to withdraw most of the three divisions in Mongolia, the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and Russian pressure on Vietnam to end its occupation of Kampuchea. Despite these developments, however, concerns about Soviet encirclement persist.¹¹

Even these concerns are moderated, however, by the overall belief that the total balance of forces in Asia are sufficient to sustain a lengthy peace when arrayed against the USSR. Thus, Soviet forces along the Chinese borders, viewed with great apprehension early in the decade, are currently interpreted by PRC analysts with equanimity. They are seen as being intended primarily to deal with contingencies involving

⁹ Cited in R Delfs, 'Passing the Test', *FAER*, 3 November 1988, p 36.

¹⁰ Radio Beijing in Russian, 29 December 1988, in FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, 4 January 1989, p 10, and the *New York Times*, 4 December 1988.

¹¹ Author's interviews with analysts at the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies and the Shanghai Institute of International Relations, 30 May and 1 June 1988.

Japan and the USA. Moreover, the Chinese openly acknowledge that Soviet ground forces are well below European readiness levels: half of the Far East divisions at about one-quarter strength and therefore unprepared for a war with China at short notice. Since a serious threat of invasion would require about 3 million Soviet troops (some of which would maintain the European front), the PLA can afford to be somewhat relaxed. Actual Soviet troop strength along the border is at about half a million, facing PLA forces three times that number. Within ten years, China's deterrent capacity will be enhanced both because of Western technology and a buildup of land-based nuclear forces to about twenty inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and perhaps three nuclear-fuelled ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).¹²

Given the PRC's low priority for military modernisation and the USSR's parallel interest in its own economic revitalisation, the stage could be set for significant arms reductions along their common border. As Banning Garrett has noted: 'The Soviets may conclude that basing their force deployments against China or planning for potential post-nuclear conflict or global two front war is unrealistic and too costly.'¹³ Moreover, if the Soviets do not permanently delineate the border in the next decade, a modernised China in the twenty-first century could become an irredentist China.

Beijing links the Soviet decision to reduce its armed forces along the Chinese border to Gorbachev's new thinking, which diminishes the role of military force and coercive diplomacy in foreign policy and proposes instead the reconfiguration of force structures for defensive purposes. If Gorbachev's unilateral initiatives are reciprocated by the USA over the next several years, some PRC analysts foresee the prospect of significant reductions in both nuclear and conventional arms, thus freeing Soviet and US resources for the economic revitalisation needed to cope with Japanese and West European economic challenges.¹⁴ (The Soviets have told the Chinese that recalculations of their GNP show it to be only 50 per cent that of the USA rather than the 75 per cent they had believed.)¹⁵

¹² See the discussion of China's relatively sanguine view of the Sino-Soviet military balance in G Klintonworth, 'China's security policy', pp 13-14, 16. These views were also expressed to the author at the Beijing Institute of International Strategic Studies, 30 May 1988.

¹³ B Garrett, 'Gorbachev's reassessment of Soviet security needs: implications for Northeast Asia', presented to the Australian National University Research School of Pacific Studies Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, 12-14 August 1987, pp 29-30.

¹⁴ Radio Beijing in Russian, 12 December 1988, FBIS, *Daily Report, China*, 14 December 1988, p 9; and *Ban Yue Tan* (24) 25 December 1988, in *ibid*, 25 January 1989, p 3.

¹⁵ Author's interviews with analysts in Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming and Kuangzhou in June 1988.

The general trend of recent Chinese foreign policy towards the USSR has also been seen as positive in Moscow. Most important has been the cessation of Beijing's pre-1982 call for a Sino-US-Japanese entente, and the PRC's more evenhanded approach to the USA and the USSR. Positive PRC reportage on Soviet domestic developments is reciprocated by Moscow; and both sides are re-adopting anti-imperialistic rhetoric on Third World issues.¹⁶

Nevertheless, Beijing's care in emphasising the limits to Sino-Soviet rapprochement is a signal to Japan and the USA that there will not be a revival of the 1950s. The Chinese point out that despite Soviet offers to reduce their forces in Mongolia, they continue to build their naval and air contingents in East and Southeast Asia. In sum, the Americans should maintain a strong military profile in Asia regardless of the apparent Sino-Soviet détente.

The PLA and Sino-Soviet relations

Former PRC defence minister, Zhang Aiping, has characterised China's international security environment as essentially stable. The probability of world war is 'meagre' since the superpowers possess a balance of both nuclear and conventional weapons and because the new race to develop high technology non-nuclear weapons will take between ten and twenty years. The PLA must be content, therefore, to give civilian scientific and technological developments precedence, knowing that in time innovation in basic industry will yield military applications. Nonetheless, the PLA should continue 'the practice of actively supporting defense technology useful to us from foreign countries . . . With the growth of our country's economic strength, we will gradually increase the sum . . . spent on defense buildup . . .'¹⁷ Underscoring Zhang's equable view of China's military situation has been the decline of the defence budget from 6 per cent to 3 per cent of GNP between 1980 and 1987.¹⁸

The gradual modernisation of the PLA has also meant reducing its

and with B Garrett and B Glaser of the System Planning Corporation, Arlington, Virginia, 15 October 1987. Garrett and Glaser's remarks were based on their discussions with analysts in the PRC.

¹⁶ For a good discussion of the state of relations in the 1980s, see H J Ellison, 'Sino Soviet relations', *Problems of Communism* May-June 1987, pp 17-29.

¹⁷ Zhang Aiping, 'National Defence Buildup', *Jiefangjun Bao*, 15 August 1987, in FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, 17 September 1987, pp 12-16. Also see R Delfs, 'Old soldiers fade away', *FEER*, 13 August 1987, p 15.

¹⁸ H W Jencks, 'Defending China in 1987', *Current History*, September 1987, p 266.

size by one million between 1985 and 1987. PRC sources now put the total defence budget at less than \$5.5 billion and note that many defence plants 'have been turned to civilian use or shared by both the military and civilians'.¹⁹ 1987 defence expenditures were at a record low of 8.2 per cent of the total state budget (compared with 20 per cent when the PLA invaded Vietnam in 1979).²⁰

A review of PLA air force and navy inventories reveals systems that are at least thirty years old (TU-16 Badgers) with no air-to-air missiles for self-protection or electronic counter-measures (ECMS). Nor does the navy deploy surface-to-air missiles or provide air cover beyond China's coastal waters. Both the navy and the air force lack significant in-flight refuelling capabilities.²¹ The PLA plans to correct these deficiencies by developing advanced radars, air-to-air refuelling, at-sea replenishment and naval air surveillance. General Electric and the Hughes Corporation are assisting in electronics upgrades, although these developments will take years before they provide China with a power projection capability either to the north or south.²²

Indeed, PLA planners emphasise that defence modernisation cannot succeed until the manpower base is effectively trained. Currently, China lacks the educational infrastructure to build truly modern armed forces. That infrastructure in the form of military education must precede the introduction of new technology. Primary emphasis is therefore now being given to the human side of military development: reorganisation, the creation of an officer corps capable of fighting a modern war, the opening of military academies and colleges, and, finally, the gradual introduction of new technology, for example, the F-8 tactical fighter and the modified T-59 tank.

This current slow approach to modernisation has not increased Soviet anxiety, unlike Moscow's reaction to US offers in 1979 to assist China's military modernisation. In turn, PRC officials conceded privately to Western visitors in 1985 that the fifty Soviet divisions on their borders

¹⁹ Address by Qian Qichen, PRC Vice Foreign Minister to the UN Disarmament Conference, *Xinhua* Domestic Service to Chinese, 16 August 1987, in FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, 18 August 1987, pp 1-2.

²⁰ *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 July 1987.

²¹ For descriptions of PLA deficiencies, see L M Wortzel, 'US technology transfer policies and the modernisation of China's armed forces', *Asian Survey*, 27(6) June 1987, pp 629-32; K G Weiss, 'The naval dimension of the Sino Soviet rivalry', *Naval War College Review* 38(1) January-February 1985, pp 39-47; and A J Gregor, 'The military potential of the Peoples' Republic of China and Western security interests', *Asian Affairs* 11(1) spring 1984, pp 1-24.

²² L Wortzel, 'US technology transfer policies and the modernization of China's armed forces', p 632.

were essentially defensive. Moreover, Soviet Far Eastern air and naval deployments—ss-20 missiles, 'Backfire' bombers, and Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam—were portrayed as part of Moscow's 'global strategic posture' directed at the USA and Japan, rather than at China. By implication, these deployments were seen as legitimate, or at least were not considered imminently threatening to the PRC. This perception is reinforced by Soviet pledges to reduce border forces further by 1991.²³

As the prospect of a direct Sino-Soviet military confrontation recedes, PLA planners can concentrate on more probable military scenarios: localised conflicts of limited duration along their southern land and sea frontiers. To prepare for these contingencies, PLA manoeuvres in 1988 included rapid deployment forces with helicopters and paratroops. With conflicts over the Spratly Islands in mind, China has also bolstered its Southern Fleet in the South China Sea from twenty to seventy ships, while constructing small garrisons on some of the contested islands.²⁴

Beijing is prepared to encourage arms limitation talks between the USA and the USSR. For the first time in years, the talks are not denounced as a sham or as the basis for renewed Soviet-US contention. According to Bonnie Glaser's interviews with PRC analysts, the continued buildup of US and Soviet forces in Asia can, over time, only harm China's influence. Moreover, a regional arms race creates tension that will strengthen Soviet-US bipolarity and reduce China's manoeuvrability in the triangular relationship. Arms reductions would, by contrast, enhance Beijing's political clout, although the PRC has no intention of becoming a participant in superpower arms control negotiations.²⁵ China's unwillingness to participate, however, probably raises the USSR's own concerns about the PRC's conventional and nuclear force modernisation and, therefore, generates a need to calculate PLA force levels along with those of the USA and Japan.²⁶ This situation does not augur well for arms control in Northeast Asia.

PRC reaction to the Soviet-US INF accord is also ambivalent. On the one hand the treaty is welcomed as an unprecedented step towards the

²³ *FEER*, 20 March 1986, p 66, and a statement by Soviet Foreign Ministry Spokesman Gennadiy Gerasimov to Tokyo NHK Television, 4 January 1989, in FBIS, *Daily Report: Soviet Union*, 5 January 1989, p 12.

²⁴ Tai Ming Cheung, 'Goodbye people's war', *FEER*, 1 December 1988, p 21; and *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 November 1988, p 36.

²⁵ B Glaser, 'Soviet, Chinese, and American perspectives on arms control in Northeast Asia', pp 18, 22, 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp 15-17.

elimination of a whole category of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the removal of land-based intermediate range ballistic missiles does not significantly reduce the nuclear arsenal of either side; nor does it halt continued research on missile defence systems which would particularly disadvantage countries with limited nuclear capabilities such as China. Moreover, PRC analysts note that both the USA and the USSR are placing more emphasis on preparations for conventional warfare than a nuclear confrontation. Each is developing sophisticated, high-tech conventional weapons such as precision-guided munitions, automated battlefields, directed energy weapons, and command-and-control arrangements utilising artificial intelligence. 'Higher accuracy, greater lethality, quicker response, and longer range are the characteristics of these latest conventional weapons ...' China cannot hope to match these technological breakthroughs.²⁷

From a US perspective, military stalemate on the Sino-Soviet border may be a favourable long-term condition. Continued Soviet concern over China's military modernisation inhibits any decision to relocate missiles, aircraft or personnel either to the European sector of the USSR or towards the Middle East. The PLA's gradual modernisation serves US interests by forcing the USSR to disperse its forces to Asia, where Washington's strategic position is superior to Moscow's.

Japan, Korea, and Sino-Soviet relations

Japan plays an important, albeit ambivalent, role in China's Soviet policy. PRC analysts acknowledge the Japanese component in the USA's Asian security policy, including Tokyo's commitment to undertake sealane defence within a 1000-mile radius of Honshu. They also write approvingly of joint US-Japanese exercises designed for better coordination between the two armed forces against a potential Soviet threat. These developments are seen to contain the Soviet Pacific Fleet in its 'offshore waters' and 'to minimize Soviet influence over the Asia Pacific region'.²⁸

Nevertheless, China's own anti-hegemony policy, prominent in the 1970s and early 1980s, has been changed to a diplomatic policy of

²⁷ Author's interviews with analysts in Beijing and Shanghai, 30 May and 1 June 1988. Also see Yuan Jun, 'The evolution of the Soviet and American strategies and military doctrines during the eighties', *International Strategic Studies* (Beijing), June 1988, p 24.

²⁸ Xie Wenqing, 'US-Soviet military contention in the Asia-Pacific region', *Shijie Zhushi* (6) 16 March 1987, in FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, 31 March 1987. A2 A5.

independence, closer in many ways to Japan's classic 'omnidirectional diplomacy'. Because its primary goal is modernisation, Beijing requires a peaceful international environment. The US-Japanese buildup may be a two-edged sword from the PRC's perspective. Although it serves to balance Soviet Pacific deployments, the expansion of Japanese security defence forces and US forces could also fuel a Pacific arms race, forcing China to fall further behind all three great powers in the region and/or divert additional resources to its own military buildup before its industrial infrastructure is prepared.

Moreover, the PRC seems genuinely concerned about the revival of an independent Japanese military policy, resulting either from a falling-out between Washington and Tokyo over economic issues or simply a Japanese decision that a great economic power should pursue its own independent foreign and military policy.²⁹ China's increasingly jaundiced view of Japan, according to Doak Barnett, is the product of disillusion over Japanese behaviour: its sharp business practices in China, unwillingness to share technology, and continued investment in Taiwan's economy.³⁰

Appreciation over Japan's incipient ambitions to become a great military power were expressed to me by PRC analysts who warned that Tokyo would 'slip the American noose' at some point, particularly if US strategy led to a relocation of US forces away from the Northwest Pacific. One analyst even suggested that if China were confronted alone by Japanese air and naval power, Beijing might return to some kind of defence arrangement with the USSR.³¹

These admittedly extreme views should be placed within a context of recent Sino-Japanese political tensions, including Chinese complaints about Japanese school textbooks which gloss over atrocities in China during World War II, the Yasukuni shrine visits by high level Japanese officials, and the December 1987 PRC student demonstrations against Japan's 'second invasion' (its economic penetration of China). Indeed, Hu Yaobang's political demise may well have been at least partly related to his pro-Japan orientation. The attack of the Chinese Communist Party's conservatives' on Hu also constituted a challenge to Deng's authority and reform programme.

²⁹ Susuma Awanohara's interviews with PRC analysts in 'China: a clash of nationalisms', *FEER*, 8 October 1987, pp 38-40. This view was also expressed to me in interviews with B Garrett and B Glaser (see footnote 13).

³⁰ Author's interviews with Professor A Doak Barnett, The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, and Robert Sutter and Larry Nicksch, Congressional Research Service, 15 October 1987.

³¹ Author's interviews in Beijing and Shanghai, 30 May and 1 June 1988.

In sum, although the PRC is reassured by hostile Soviet-Japanese relations and the continuation of the US-Japanese alliance, a regional arms race does not suit its purposes. For the first time, China appears interested in arms control both for its own military security and in order to focus on economic and social construction. Thus, Soviet overtures at Krasnoyarsk in September 1988 to negotiate confidence-building measures regarding security for Northeast Asia, particularly with respect to naval arms limitations, could appeal to China. If they led to a mutual reduction of Pacific forces among the USSR, Japan, and the USA, the PRC would see itself as a net beneficiary.

China wishes to see the Korean peninsula neutralised as a source of tension in Sino Soviet relations and also as a possible flashpoint in Sino-US concerns. Unlike Vietnam or India, where minor skirmishes do not affect the regional balance, war in the Korean peninsula risks the involvement of nuclear powers and the countries vital to China's modernisation (Japan and the USA). Beijing hopes, therefore, to mediate between Pyongyang and Washington. A reduction in tension on the peninsula would not only create a more stable regional environment, but would also reduce opportunities for Soviet influence, since Moscow is Pyongyang's primary arms supplier.³²

The PRC closely monitors Soviet-Korean ties. While not complaining publicly about Soviet overflights of DPRK territory and Pacific Fleet port calls at Wonsan and Nampo, the Chinese see the Russians as positioning themselves to assert influence over a successive regime to that of Kim Il-sung.³³ China's ability to counter Soviet aid to the DPRK is undermined, however, by its ever-increasing economic links to South Korea through Hong Kong, estimated at almost \$3 billion in 1988.³⁴ North Korea is suspicious of Deng Xiaoping's long-term goals, particularly China's apparent acceptance of a two-Korea policy. On the other hand, it is unlikely that Pyongyang would risk a rupture with the PRC, which would leave it completely dependent on the USSR.

Despite North Korean plans to maintain good relations with both the USSR and the PRC, there is no doubt that Pyongyang has leaned towards the former. In 1986, the Soviets announced that they had refurbished or newly built more than sixty industrial plants, producing substantial amounts of North Korean steel (28 per cent), petroleum products (50 per cent) and electricity (66 per cent). On the military

³² 'Korea: trading comrades', *FEER*, 8 December 1988, p 20.

³³ These arguments were made to the author in interviews with Professor Barnett and Drs Sutter and Niksch, Washington DC, 15 October 1987.

³⁴ R Delfs, 'Seoul's hi-tech lure across the Yellow Sea', *FEER*, 8 December 1988, p 20.

front, Pyongyang acquired 36 MIG-23 fighters, 30 SAM-3 missiles and 47 Mi-2 helicopter gunships.³⁵ (Moscow may have provided these new arms in part to purchase the DPRK's good behaviour during the 1988 Seoul Olympics at which the Soviets were a major competitor.) China has been unable to provide comparable military support, and, indeed, may even oppose a North Korean buildup given PRC interests in tension reduction.

Beijing sees its interests in the Korean peninsula as subordinate to its own modernisation programme, while avoiding the development of North Korean dependency on the USSR. To achieve these apparently contradictory ends, China is encouraging dialogue between the two Koreas and the opening up of North Korea to a range of Western contacts. Even the Soviets are urging North Korea to open its economy to trade and investment, for Moscow has reached the limits of its aid capability.³⁶

India in the Sino-Soviet relationship

From China's perspective, India's role in the Sino-Soviet relationship is due to its strategic location, adjacent to vulnerable, unstable Tibet, with continued military aid from the USSR reinforcing fears of encirclement. Efforts were made in the first half of the 1980s by both Beijing and Delhi to reach agreement on their border dispute, while simultaneously improving economic and cultural ties. The border talks have been unsuccessful, however, since China has insisted on a package arrangement under which India would accept China's claims in the northwest, and China would accept India's in the northeast. This arrangement would solidify China's road links to Tibet. Diplomatic stalemate led to renewed military pressure by China in the northeast in 1986. By 1987, both sides had strengthened their forces along the northeastern border.³⁷

³⁵ Dae-Sook Suh, 'North Korea in 1986: strengthening the Soviet connection', *Asian Survey*, 27(1) January 1987, p 58.

³⁶ P Polomka, 'Security issues on the Korean peninsula', presented to the Australian National University Research School of Pacific Studies Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, 12-14 August 1987; Hao Yufan, 'China and the Korean peninsula', *Asian Survey*, 27(8) August 1987, pp 862-84; Lee Suk-Ho, 'Evolution and prospects of Soviet-North Korean relations', *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, 5(3) autumn 1986, pp 19-32; and D Sneider, 'North Korea makes overture to South', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 January 1989, p 3.

³⁷ A good summary of these developments may be found in M M Bouton, 'Foreign relations: elusive regional security' in his edited book, *India Briefing, 1987*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987, pp 172-3.

Sino-Soviet détente has been a major impetus in Rajiv Gandhi's recent efforts to improve India's relations with the PRC. The Indian Prime Minister's journey to Beijing in late December 1988 was the first by an Indian head of government since his grandfather's in 1954. As Beijing and Moscow reduce their mutual antagonisms, New Delhi does not wish to appear out of step. Moreover, the relaxation of Sino-Indian tensions from Beijing's point of view also removes an incentive for Moscow to continue its lavish military aid to India. Although the Sino-Indian summit achieved no substantive progress on a border accord, the final communiqué did reiterate India's assurance that it accepted Tibet as an autonomous region of China and that 'anti-China political activities by Tibetan elements are not permitted on Indian soil'.³⁸

Vietnam: the most important 'obstacle'

Beijing's three obstacles to Sino-Soviet reconciliation are meant to be a reassuring signal to the West about the limits of rapprochement. Indeed, China identified Soviet support for Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea as the main obstacle only after Gorbachev had made concessions on the other two, with partial troop withdrawals from Afghanistan and Mongolia, as well as acceptance of the *Thalweg* principle along the Amur River boundary. Finally, a promised Vietnamese military withdrawal from Kampuchea by 1990 led to a Sino-Soviet summit in May 1989. Even that noteworthy event however, as both Moscow and Beijing remind the world, will not lead to a return to the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s.

The PRC has publicly articulated its acceptance of Soviet bases in Vietnam as directed primarily against US forces in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the PRC probably hopes that once the Kampuchean conflict is resolved, Hanoi will somehow force a reduction in the Pacific Fleet presence. Cam Ranh Bay is currently the southern anchor of the Soviet encirclement, with some twenty-five Soviet warships including both surface combatants and cruise-missile submarines—more than a match for the PLA's Southern Fleet. Additionally, the Soviets have been aiding Vietnam's naval development, providing frigates, fast attack craft, and ASW helicopters. Joint Soviet-Vietnamese anti-submarine warfare exercises off Da Nang are probably designed to cope with a Chinese submarine threat.³⁹

³⁸ R Delfs and R Manchanda, 'Return to realism', *FEER*, 5 January 1989, pp 10–11.

³⁹ K G Weiss, 'The naval dimension of the Sino-Soviet rivalry', pp 42–3.

The Soviets themselves are aware of the political vulnerability of their naval position at Cam Ranh Bay. Settlement of the Kampuchean conflict and a subsequent reduction in Moscow's aid to Hanoi could vitiate Vietnam's willingness to continue playing host to Soviet forces. Gorbachev anticipated this possibility in his September 1988 speech in Krasnoyarsk, when he spoke of a possible trade-off of US and Soviet naval and air assets from Vietnam and the Philippines. Lack of enthusiasm from the ASEAN states regarding that proposal, however, led to subsequent hints that the USSR might withdraw its forces unilaterally—perhaps in the hope that, over time, the USA would reciprocate. Hanoi's response was to offer the prospect of opening Cam Ranh Bay on a commercial basis to the ships of other navies.⁴⁰

Since 1954, when the First Indochina War ended, China's strategy has been consistent: to keep Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea divided. During the Second Indochina War, Mao gave North Vietnam sufficient support to prevent defeat, but not enough to bring victory. Moscow's support for Hanoi's invasion of Kampuchea, which launched the Third Indochina War, directly challenged Beijing's long-term strategy by helping Hanoi to unify what constituted a strategic border region for the PRC. The outcome would be a Hanoi-dominated Indochina allied with Moscow.

Beijing's persistent opposition to Hanoi's Indochina hegemony is maintained at little cost. No PRC forces are fighting in Indochina; and military assistance comes directly from the PLA's own arsenals. China's leaders believe that Vietnam's economic malaise, inability to destroy the Khmer resistance, isolation from ASEAN and Western aid, and total dependence on the USSR will ultimately lead Hanoi to a compromise solution. The nature of that compromise is, however, unclear—perhaps a loose confederation with reduced dependence on the USSR. China's essential argument is that, unlike the French and Americans, the Soviets will not go away. The USSR is too large and too close to permit Vietnam the luxury of permanent confrontation. Moreover, while Vietnam is mired in economic stagnation directly attributable to its Kampuchean involvement, China's economy is enjoying the most rapid growth in that country's history.

Hanoi, in turn, displays constant anxiety that its interests will be

⁴⁰ Remarks made in Manila by Deputy Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces General Staff Vladimir Lobov, AFP (Hong Kong) 21 January 1989, in FBIS, *Daily Report: East Asia*, 23 January 1989, p 55; and *Izvestiya* quoting the Vietnam Press, 29 November 1988

sacrificed to a Sino-Soviet rapprochement, especially since the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea was placed on the Sino-Soviet discussion agenda in 1986. Because of the Soviet military assistance and its own one million-strong army, Vietnam presents a regional challenge to China in Southeast Asia on its own—not merely as a Soviet surrogate.

From Vietnam's perspective, Indochina's unity is equally compelling. As General Vo Nguyen Giap stated in 1950:

Indochina is a single strategic battlefield. For this reason, and especially because of the strategic terrain, we cannot consider Vietnam to be independent as long as Cambodia and Laos are under imperialist domination, just as we cannot consider Cambodia and Laos to be independent so long as Vietnam is under imperialist rule. The colonists used Cambodia to attack Vietnam [in 1947].⁴¹

Yet dependence on the USSR limits Vietnam's options in conducting its Indochina policy. In the aftermath of Gorbachev's conciliatory speech toward China in Vladivostok in July 1986, Hanoi also adopted conciliatory gestures toward Beijing, releasing Chinese prisoners and captured fishermen, reopening limited cultural exchanges, and most important, dropping its reference to China as a 'direct and dangerous enemy' at the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986. Any movement towards genuine Sino-Vietnamese reconciliation, however, would probably require Hanoi to abandon its 'special relationship' with Laos and Kampuchea. Interestingly, Hanoi seemed to be moving in this direction in the late 1980s, claiming it had withdrawn most of its forces from Laos and would leave Kampuchea no later than 1990. Soviet pressure on Vietnam to devise a new relationship with the PRC probably reflects Moscow's desire to reduce Hanoi's dependence on Soviet largesse, and to create a political situation in Southeast Asia which would permit Vietnam to open its economy to Western reconstruction assistance. The Vietnamese are also studying China's experience with 'market socialism', noting that conditions in the PRC are more relevant for Vietnam than the Soviet experience.⁴² The Soviets are attempting to wean Vietnam away from heavy economic depend-

⁴¹ Cited in C. Thayer, 'Security issues in Southeast Asia: the third Indochina war', presented to the Australian National University Research School of Pacific Studies Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, 12-14 August 1987, p. 2. Also see G. Porter, 'Cambodia: Sihanouk's initiative', *Foreign Affairs*, spring 1988, p. 810.

⁴² N. Chanda, 'Taking a soft line', *FEER*, and C. Jones, '... Soviets lose favor with Vietnamese', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 December 1988.

ence (two-thirds of Hanoi's imports in 1987) by doubling the prices of goods delivered.⁴³

China has pointed out that its opposition to Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea adds to Thailand's and, therefore, ASEAN's security. Because 60–70 per cent of the People's Army of Vietnam's divisions are deployed north of Hanoi, Vietnam cannot pose a significant invasion threat to Thailand. Beginning in 1987, China signed contracts with the Thai military for the delivery of Chinese armour, field guns, ships and missiles at bargain prices, with at least the acquiescence of Thailand's ASEAN partners and US approval. Privately, Indonesia expressed its reservations about the arrangement, pointing out that Thai reliance on the PRC serves to draw the latter further into Southeast Asian affairs, inhibiting a settlement regarding Kampuchea and cementing even more closely Hanoi–Moscow ties.⁴⁴ PRC Foreign Ministry officials have informed me that military aid to Thailand would continue even if the Kampuchean conflict is resolved, so long as the Thai government requests it. Beijing is willing to sell arms to other ASEAN members, but only Thailand has expressed any interest.⁴⁵

China's partial shift from direct military action against Vietnam to military assistance for Thailand's self defence reflects Beijing's lack of emphasis on its own military and its new interest in a political solution for Kampuchea. In July 1986, the Chinese told Sihanouk that they no longer opposed representation from the Heng Samrin faction in a coalition government, and that China would reduce the Khmer Rouge role in the event of a Vietnamese withdrawal.⁴⁶ China's more accommodating rhetoric, however, has not been followed by an indication that it is prepared to abandon the Khmer Rouge. To the contrary, Beijing may actually have increased military assistance since 1987 as the Khmer Rouge began to establish hidden weapons caches in western Kampuchea. Presumably these stockpiles would be available for use against whatever coalition government might form after a Vietnamese withdrawal in 1990.

These ominous developments were underscored by my research insti-

⁴³ G C Gunn, 'Prospects for reform in Indochina', *The Pacific Review*, 1(4) 1988, p 376.

⁴⁴ M Richardson, 'Thailand bargain buy, but Indonesians wonder why', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, August 1987, pp 5–6; M Richardson, 'China arms stockpiling worries Thai allies', *International Herald Tribune*, 16 November 1988.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with PRC Foreign Ministry officials, Arizona State University, 12 December 1988.

⁴⁶ These political shifts are cited in L Buszynski, 'ASEAN: a changing regional role', *Asian Survey*, 27(7) July 1987, pp 772–3.

tute interviews in Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming and Guangzhou in June 1988. PRC analysts insisted that China would not stop its aid to the Khmer Rouge until the Vietnamese had completely withdrawn from Kampuchea and a coalition government which included the Khmer Rouge had been formed.⁴⁷ Yet, when pressed to assess the future of such a coalition, PRC commentators were uniformly pessimistic. They anticipated an unstable government, fraught with mutual suspicions, unable to integrate separate armed forces or develop a common administration. This hydra-headed leadership, the analysts speculated, would soon degenerate into a new civil war from which the Khmer Rouge would emerge militarily dominant. Once again, Vietnam would be faced with the dilemma of intervening to protect its security zone or abandoning its plans for Indochinese dominance to concentrate on externally assisted domestic development. Either way, PRC analysts believe that Beijing's political position on the Southeast Asian mainland will be strengthened, and that Hanoi will have to acknowledge the dominance in terms of security of its northern neighbour.

China's adamant opposition to Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina is an important political statement. By opposing Vietnam, the PRC signals that it has abandoned a revolutionary posture (by fighting a Third World country), is normalising relations with the West (by fighting a socialist country) and is committed to the international status quo in Asia (by opposing an Indochinese federation). In short, China's opposition to Vietnam has dramatised its new self-image for the world to see.

Nevertheless, the Chinese have stated both publicly and privately that if Vietnam withdraws its forces and a government of reconciliation is established in Phnom Penh led by Prince Sihanouk and including some Khmer Rouge members, then Beijing would accept that regime's nonalignment and would restore diplomatic relations based on the 1950s model of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The Chinese believe that such a Sino-Vietnamese agreement would be acceptable to the USSR and that, in time, the ties between Hanoi and Moscow would be loosened.⁴⁸

As part of an understanding on disengagement, however, the PRC insists that the Khmer Rouge should play a role in the formation of

⁴⁷ In addition to my May-June 1988 interviews in the PRC, see the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement as carried by *Xinhua*, 11 August 1988, in FBIS, *Daily Report, China*, 11 August 1988, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Also see the discussion in G. Porter, 'Cambodia: Sihanouk's initiative', especially pp. 812, 816, 817, 824.

any reconciliation government. Without membership in a four-part coalition, PRC officials warn, the Khmer Rouge will renew the civil war.⁴⁹ If the Khmer Rouge are provided with a political role, however, China has promised to stop its military assistance to them in conjunction with the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea.⁵⁰

The PRC has not commented, however, on Sihanouk's suggestion that all Khmer groups cooperate to isolate the Khmer Rouge, excluding the latter from any post-Vietnam role. Such a development would tax Beijing's diplomatic skills, for although the PRC desires a Sihanouk-led Kampuchea, it may also hope for a Khmer Rouge component as China's medium of influence. Hoping to mollify the prince, Khieu Samphan—vice-president of Democratic Kampuchea—offered a plan in August 1988 which would integrate the Khmer Rouge army into a 'four-party general headquarters'. According to this proposal, all military forces would be restricted to barracks under international supervision, thus assuring both Vietnam and Sihanouk that the Khmer Rouge could not unilaterally initiate a military assault on any successor government. Enforcing these arrangements is another matter, however, even if they were to be accepted, although PRC officials aver they will not assist the Khmer Rouge in the event of renewed hostilities following a Vietnamese withdrawal.⁵¹

Resolution of the Kampuchean conflict alone will not automatically lead to détente in Sino-Vietnamese relations, and, therefore, completely remove Vietnam as a problem for Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Rather, the Sino-Vietnamese conflict is in the process of shifting from the mainland to the adjacent South China Sea. In March 1988, PLA naval vessels sank three Vietnamese ships in the waters surrounding some of the disputed Spratly Islands. The PRC subsequently built platforms on these atolls and deployed a small number of small ships to guard them, underlining its claim to the strategically-located island chain. The timing of Beijing's occupation of these small pieces of land may have been based on the belief that until Vietnam left Kampuchea it remained an international pariah whose course would not be championed in international councils.⁵² If so, these calculations proved to be accurate. Not

⁴⁹ Author's interview with PRC Foreign Ministry officials, Arizona State University, 12 December 1988.

⁵⁰ S Erlanger, 'Gains toward Cambodia settlement are seen', *New York Times*, 17 January 1989.

⁵¹ *Renmin Ribao*, 16 August 1988, in FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, 17 August 1988, p 18; and the author's interview with PRC Foreign Ministry officials, 12 December 1988.

⁵² Author's interviews with Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser based on their March 1988 discussions in Beijing, Washington DC, 3 May 1988.

only has the USSR refrained from endorsing Vietnam's claims to the Spratly Islands, but Moscow has apparently also ignored China's decision to incorporate the Paracels and Spratlys into Hainan province. Hanoi can only wonder about Soviet reliability on this new dimension of Sino-Vietnamese discord.⁵³ On the other hand, PRC efforts to resolve its South China Sea claims by force could drive the ASEAN states and Vietnam closer together after the Vietnamese withdraw from Kampuchea. To forestall such a development, the PRC must separate its conflict with Vietnam regarding the Spratly Islands from its other jurisdictional disputes with Malaysia and the Philippines. In discussions at the research institutes on Southeast Asia in Kunming and Guangzhou in June 1988, I was informed that China hopes to resolve these other claims on the Spratlys through negotiations and possibly joint development. These peaceful intentions were reiterated during subsequent visits by PRC delegations to the Philippines.

Conclusion

Under Gorbachev, Moscow has gone to great lengths to remove the impediments to Sino-Soviet normalisation. The Soviets have withdrawn from Afghanistan and pledged to reduce by 200,000 their forces along the Sino-Soviet frontier and Mongolia.⁵⁴ The Kremlin has also pressured Hanoi to accelerate its departure from Kampuchea and effect its own *modus vivendi* with the PRC. Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze has even hinted that the Soviets might unilaterally relinquish their naval base at Cam Ranh Bay within the next decade—a further demonstration that the USSR no longer follows an encirclement strategy against the PRC.

The PRC sees the USSR as taking an essentially defensive posture, working to remove the military, political and economic burdens that came with the overextension of Soviet power in the Third World during Brezhnev's last years. Improved relations with the USSR have helped to free China from a large defence commitment and channel its capital into economic development. Since the early 1980s, Beijing has cut its military expenditure, reduced its armed forces by one million, and re-directed many defence industries into civilian activities.

⁵³ For an excellent discussion of the South China Sea disputes, see D F Weatherbee, 'The South China Sea: from zone of conflict to zone of peace?' in L Grinter and Young Whan Kihl (eds), *East Asian Conflict Zones*, New York: St Martins Press, 1987, pp 123–48.

⁵⁴ Beijing Domestic Service, 2 February 1989, in FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, February 1989, p 12.

This evolution in China's policy towards the USSR underlines an important proposition: China is prepared to accept the USSR as a legitimate Asian power as the latter abandons its encirclement policy. This proposition may have been behind Deng's April 1985 statement that China would not object to the maintenance of Soviet bases in Vietnam, provided Moscow would pressure Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea. In other words, although Soviet power in Asia is legitimate (to balance that of the USA and Japan), Vietnam's putative mini-empire on China's southern border is not. It may also be true that China sees the presence of a relatively modest Soviet naval and air presence in Vietnam as the price the region must pay to keep the more substantial US forces in the Philippines.

There are, however, distinct limits to the relationship. As long as China's top priority is modernisation, rapprochement with the West takes precedence over improved Sino-Soviet relations. Additionally, political and economic ties to the USA, Western Europe and Japan prevent China from being isolated in Asia where suspicion over its long-term intentions remains strong.

The PRC's overall strategic posture for the next few years will be based on quadrangular ties to the USA, the USSR and Japan. Broad-based relations with the USA and economic ties with Japan are balanced by improved diplomatic relations with the USSR. Rapidly growing barter trade with the USSR and Eastern Europe helps to balance China's trade deficit with Japan. An important advantage of these three sets of relations is that they reduce China's vulnerability to dependence on any single major power.⁵⁵

A change of conditions could alter this generally optimistic forecast for Asian stability as a result of gradually improved Sino-Soviet relations. Stepped-up Soviet military actions, additional deployments in Asia, renewed PRC hostilities with Vietnam over the Spratlys or a Khmer Rouge power grab, or an escalation of the Soviet-US arms race could lead China to reconsider its security situation and to turn towards greater defence acquisitions.

There may be disadvantages for the USA in better Sino-Soviet relations. The reduction of Sino-Soviet forces along their common border could permit the Soviets to relocate soldiers either to the European front or closer to the Middle East, while additional PLA forces could be made available for the Vietnam border or deployed opposite Taiwan

⁵⁵ M. Okseberg, 'China's confident nationalism', *Foreign Affairs: American and the World 1986*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1987, p. 506.

again. Alternatively, a Sino-Soviet diplomatic entente could be formed, reinforcing their parallel positions on such international issues as Star Wars and South Africa, thereby isolating the USA during debates such as those in the United Nations. Another possibility is that a united Sino-Soviet front on arms control could increase their respective political leverage on the USA.⁵⁶

On balance, however, these possible problems seem manageable. The divergence of Sino-US interests is apt to be a gradual process and only minimally disruptive to the overall relationship. Assuming that current economic reforms succeed, and domestic political trends continue to move China towards a more pluralist system, ultimately the PRC will modernise its military forces, perhaps towards the end of the next decade. A strong PRC, in both economic and military terms, may well raise its regional political profile, insisting that territorial and other conflicts be resolved in its favour. At that point, the USA could face some difficult choices between such long-term Asian friends and allies as the ASEAN states and Japan, and its more recent cordiality with the PRC.

⁵⁶ R. Sutter, 'Sino-Soviet relations, recent improvements and implications for the United States', *Issue Brief*, Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 14 October 1987, p 13.

Overcoming Philippine underdevelopment: an alternative programme

The installation of the Aquino government in February 1986, after the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship, has re-ignited the debate over development strategy in the Philippines. This article aims to analyse Philippine underdevelopment and to sketch an alternative development programme. The model proposed here summarises previous research discussed in Ferrer (1987), Ferrer and Montes (1987), and Montes (1988).¹

The debate on underdevelopment in the Philippines is particularly critical because it is occurring in a region of the world where the newly industrialising countries (NICs) have recently managed a transition to industrialised status by a combination of bourgeois orientation and heavy state intervention, and because the Philippines appear to have attempted—at least in form—all the fashionable approaches to development since the end of World War II, and still seems to be failing.

The Philippines had probably the earliest and most vigorous post-World War II import-substitution programme beginning, as it did, in the 1950s. This programme was implemented with the support and technical assistance of the previous colonial ruler, the USA, and US multinational corporations, despite objections from significant portions of the domestic elite.²

When, as happened elsewhere, the strategy of substitution in the

Financial support from the War on Want Foundation and the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) is gratefully acknowledged. The author benefited from the comments of the PRRM staff, notably Rose Nierras and Romeo Gaffud, Reginald Green, James K Boyce and James Putzel. The author is responsible for all opinions in the article.

¹ See R D Ferrer, 'Theoretic and programmatic framework for the development of underdeveloped countries', *New Progressive Review* 3 (2) 1987, pp 2-25; R D Ferrer and M F Montes, 'Macroeconomic aspects of a mixed economy', working paper, Quezon City: Philippine Center for Policy Studies, University of the Philippines, 21 September 1987; and M F Montes, 'Overcoming Philippine underdevelopment', paper presented at the Roundtable Experts' Consultation on Alternative Development Strategies for the Philippines and Options for its Debt Problems, 22-23 March 1988, Overseas Development Institute, London.

² See S Maxfield and J H Nolt, 'Protectionism and the internationalization of capital: US sponsorship of import substitution industrialization in the Philippines, Turkey and Argentina', working paper, 4 January 1987.

final-stage production of consumption goods proved to be unsustainable,³ policy-makers attempted a shift to an export-oriented economy. This was effected by the devaluation of the peso and the dismantling (and replacement with tariffs) of the import-control system, beginning with an International Monetary Fund programme in 1962. The initial burst of exports, reflecting some diversification into the expanded exportation of forest and mineral products,⁴ was quickly dissipated and the new exports had limited linkage to the domestic economy. There was limited interest in export on the part of the domestic oligopolies and monopolies, created during import-substitution and owned by the domestic elite and US multinationals.

Between the balance-of-payments crisis of 1970 and the declaration of martial law by Ferdinand Marcos in 1972 and 1983, the Philippine economy embarked on what has generally been regarded as 'debt-driven growth'. The stock of outstanding external debt grew by 20.1 per cent per annum between 1970 and 1983, and the debt-to-GNP ratio more than doubled.

During this period, some further export 'diversification' occurred as the traditional exports of the 1960s fell from 91.5 per cent of total exports in 1970 to 23.9 per cent in 1987. This was brought about as much by the fall in absolute value of traditional exports as by expansion into new areas.⁵ By 1986, manufacturing accounted for 61 per cent of the total value of Philippine exports (as opposed to 22 per cent in Thailand). New exports (garments and electronic products) increased, but, manufactured in bonded warehouses in tax-free zones, these areas had only limited linkage to the domestic manufacturing sector.⁶ Such diversification did not ward off the onset of the 1983 balance-of-payments crisis: the fall of the Marcos regime occurred in the midst of the severest IMF adjustment programme that the country had implemented.⁷

The hypothesis of this article is that the terms on which Philippine

³ See G P Siat, 'Import demand and import substitution in the Philippines, 1953-1963', discussion paper 69-2, Quezon City: Institute of Economic Development and Research, University of the Philippines, 25 January 1969.

⁴ Land area planted to food actually declined as that planted to sugar increased and the country experienced rice shortages in the late 1960s.

⁵ See M F Montes, 'Philippine structural adjustments from 1970', working paper, Quezon City: Institute of Economic Development and Research, University of the Philippines, 17 December 1988.

⁶ See F Alburo, 'Philippine trade in manufactures: structural change and adjustment', Quezon City School of Economics, University of the Philippines, discussion paper 8509, where it is reported that domestic value added represents at most 30 per cent of the value of these exports.

⁷ See M F Montes, *The Philippines: stabilization and adjustment policies and programmes*, Helsinki: World Institute for Development Economics Research, United Nations University, March 1987.

policies concerning the national economy have been criticised and debated in the past have been inappropriate. It is not sufficient to locate the failure of Philippine development efforts in an over-reliance on import-substitution or in an inward looking development strategy. Neither would it be sufficient to attribute such failure to the inadequacy of domestic protection or the insufficiency of resources devoted to industrialisation. The size of the country's foreign debt, seen in the light of its minimal capacity in manufactured exports, attests to the enormous resources that have been applied in the name of 'industrialisation' and import-substitution.

Philippine policy has developed the 'mixed economy' paradigm to a particularly high level of sophistication and destruction. The interventions of the Marcos government, for example, included government managed but privately controlled cooperatives in the sugar and coconut sectors.

Another favoured explanation of the failure of development efforts has been that successive governments committed a series of technical errors in policy. It has been suggested, for example, that the failure of Philippine export-promotion in the 1970s (in contrast to the success of South Korea) can be traced to the continued overvaluation of the Philippine peso. While not an inaccurate description of events, this would still not explain why such an inconsistency in policy was sustained to the point of crisis.

Theories that rely principally on the identification of technical errors in policy such as these are unable to explain the persistence of policy inconsistencies, and have been compelled to regard lack of political will as the ultimate explanation. But this leads us to enquire into the process by which the political will for consistent programmes can be generated.

Specifying the character of Philippine underdevelopment

I propose to use two terms from political economy in order to discuss the causes of Philippine development problems: the feudal socio-economic structure; and the colonial economic framework that bounds its economic relationships with the rest of the world.

Feudal socio-economic structures

The role of feudalism in the country's underdevelopment is a controversial topic. My view is that feudalism plays more than a passive role in relation to capitalism: it actively reproduces the conditions of underdevelopment.

I propose a generalised conception of feudalism, in which it exists not only as a 'remnant'⁸ surviving the onslaught of capitalism, nor only in agriculture. The feudal mode is characterised as one in which decisive command over 'extra-economic', superstructural means is sufficient for the securing of access to and control of the social surplus. The conception is a generalisation of the 'absentee landlord' production relationship. These extra-economic means are the decisive factor in the reconstitution of control over property, even though feudal competition means that positive interventions might occur at the economic level. These extra-economic means involve control over state apparatus, the maintenance and deformation of legal processes and the perpetuation of a culture of patronage.

In the competitive stage of capitalism, extra-economic structures are necessary to gain access to the social surplus; but they are not sufficient. Capitalists are required to innovate, to compete, and most of all, to reinvest the surpluses to which they have access. These are economic interventions⁹ that might be said to have characterised economic processes during the competitive phase of capitalism in Western countries. In contrast to extra-economic means, economic interventions involve squeezing the maximum profit from operations by the use of labour, and the reinvestment of surpluses to increase the scale of operations.¹⁰

Within our conception of feudalism, control over the social surplus is secured mainly through ownership of property and control of political power; securing control over the social surplus does not require the development of such property, as it would in a genuine capitalist process. Feudalism in Philippine agriculture, where reinvestment of surpluses has been minimal, best exemplifies this pattern.

My contention is that the same type of feudal processes have dominated the evolution of the industrial sector. After thirty-eight years of protectionism and incentives to private capital, the Philippine industrial sector remains as dependent on foreign inputs as it did in the 1950s. What has been created instead is a severely oligopolised domestic indus-

⁸ For example, in BISIG, *The Socialist Vision and Other Documents*, (documents presented during the second congress of the Bukluran sa ikaunlad ng sosyalistang isip at gawa (Organisation for the Development of Socialist Thought and Practice), 1987, p 27, the following statement is made: 'We have consistently characterized the Philippines as an underdeveloped and dependent capitalist society with remnants of feudalism. The capitalist rather than the feudal sector is the most dynamic aspect of this social system. It is expanding while the feudal sector is shrinking, and the growth of the capitalist sector sets the pace and direction of the development of the country as a whole.'

⁹ That is, intervention at the level of the base, instead of at the level of the superstructure.

¹⁰ In its place, the Philippine economy is saddled with overmechanisation in particular operations, inappropriately high capital intensity and capital flight.

trial sector, with little dynamism for growth and innovation. Viewed in terms of the active conception of feudalism that I have suggested above, one can see that the industrial sector has been another arena in which control over political power has guaranteed control over social surplus. Such private control has been secured and remains secure even in the absence of reinvestment and the development of enterprise.

The elements of the protectionist development strategy that has been successfully prosecuted by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan (such as import controls, tariffs and investment incentives) have not had comparable success in the Philippines. Instead, these policies have created private preserves for the country's 'industrialists' and participating international capitalists, from which to draw off their share of the surplus produced by the economy.

Because of the nature of the social formation, protectionist and industrialisation strategies have created private wealth at social expense, without corresponding increases in industrial capacity. This process of extraction of surplus by extra-economic means represents a cost to other economic activities, which all genuine investors must either include in their calculations or seek to avoid.

The proposition that a nationalist bourgeoisie will participate in efforts to change the social system derives precisely from the analysis that the economy can respond to their requirements only after the feudal aspects of the economy have been overcome.

Colonial economic framework

Feudalism in Western countries and in Japan at least permitted sustained quantitative development which provided the preconditions for subsequent qualitative change. This has not been the case in the Philippines. It appears that the country's economic integration with the old colonial markets has prevented these sustained quantitative developments from taking place.

Feudalism in the Philippines operates within the country's fragmented internal economy. In spite of the apparent modernisation, Philippine labour and product markets remain internally unintegrated or, to use a term more commonly used in neo-classical discourse, 'dualistic'.¹¹

This fragmentation has been sustainable because of a long history in

¹¹ See O J C Solon, 'Changes in the structure of agricultural production in the Philippines', working paper, Quezon City: Philippine Center for Policy Studies, University of the Philippines, 21 September 1987. Using input output methodology, Solon provides evidence of the weak linkages of export agriculture to the rest of the economy.

which economic activities make economic sense only to the extent that these are tied up either to their foreign markets or foreign sources of financing.

The most 'dynamic' sectors in the Philippine economy in the late 1980s are exports of garments, semi-conductors and prawns. In the first two cases no more than 70 per cent of the exported value is domestically produced.¹² The last product is processed for export to the Japanese market and has the potential to become a new and modern 'plantation crop'.

The intensive technical production requirements of prawn farming have not only endangered the ecology of Negros, but have also provided landlords with an argument against land reform. In fact, the response of the prawn farmers to the national crisis captures succinctly and in a microcosm the kinds of artificial transitions that have been attempted in the country. Prawn farming does not absorb as much labour as sugar or other types of farming. This means permanent loss of livelihood for labourers while the property claims of landowners are secured. The government and many technocrats are compelled to support the shift, since it appears to develop agriculture and is export-oriented.

The logic of colonial economic relations has permitted periods of growth which have created wealth for a domestic elite and their foreign patrons and partners. These periods of growth have, however, been followed by periods of stagnation, if not contraction, and have not provided the conditions for any sustained development of the economy. The periods of growth have been associated with junctures at which opportunities originating from overseas economic developments, such as the opening of the Suez canal in the 1860s (sparking sugar production) and the availability of commercial bank financing in the 1970s, have presented themselves. Periods of stagnation have been precipitated at those junctures when foreign claims on the artificially (externally) created and stagnating social surplus have become overwhelming.

The foreign claim on the Philippine social surplus, successfully asserted in the past through colonial economic relations, now manifests itself in the burden of debt.

Overcoming problems in the national economy

The combination of colonial-type economic relations and a feudal domestic mode (as defined above) provide the bedrock for the structures

¹² See F. Albuero, 'Philippine trade in manufactures: structural change and adjustment', Quezon City: School of Economics, University of the Philippines, Discussion Paper 8509.

against which purely technical solutions to Philippine underdevelopment have been thoroughly thwarted. Thus, in the absence of strong state control and/or a strong nationalist bourgeois class, export orientation has always been undermined by what would appear in conventional accounting procedures as profit remittances of multinationals or capital flight by citizens.¹³ In reality, such events reflect the anti-reinvestment bias of the economic system.

An alternative economy, with any potential for overcoming Philippine underdevelopment, must also solve the seemingly conflicting combination of inadequate capital accumulation and enormous economic surplus extraction. In particular, an alternative development strategy must concern itself with conservation and accumulation of capital and the acquisition and adaptation of technological advances. The alternative strategy would have to be directed at the dismantling of all social structures that reproduce wastage of capital and discourage its reinvestment. This would require significant property reform in order to reassign control over economic assets and markets to those with the greatest commitment to their development. Assuming the question of property assignments to have been resolved, the process of development would involve the steady implementation of small, permanent advances at the level of production. At the micro-level, industrial development actually involves the continuing adaptation and installation of small improvements in products or in the manner in which products are made. State participation in the development and acquisition of technology is indispensable in this effort.

Towards an alternative development strategy

On the basis of its record since 1986, the Aquino government will be unable to overcome the political economy constraints of Philippine underdevelopment. The Aquino government, partly by choice and partly by bounds imposed by external interests, finds itself in a position of weakness, unable to assert decisively the national interest.

President Aquino avoided legislating the phasing and setting of retention limits for agrarian reform before Congress convened. In terms of coverage, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of July 1988 will not go beyond the Marcos agrarian reform programme of 1972 until after 1992. The government is gamely attempting to complete

¹³ Should extensive capital account liberalisation occur, then investment overseas by Filipinos will also be part of these flows.

Marcos's import liberalisation, tax reform and privatisation programme.

A discussion of an alternative development strategy must therefore wrestle with the nature of the state that could address the basic problems of the socio-economic system.

The alternative state

From the point of view of the state, and based on the preceding discussion, we might describe the current Philippine development problem as one of successfully managing a genuine economic transition. There are, however, at least two transition projects that would be hypothetically definable in the Philippine economy: a transition carried out in the interest of the national bourgeoisie; and a transition carried out in the name of all of the oppressed sectors in society—peasants, workers, petty and national bourgeoisies.

Based on our specification, the national bourgeoisie is not a significant, much less a dominant, player in state policy in the Philippines. A transition carried out in the direction of a self-propelled 'capitalism' in the domestic economy, however that may be defined in the last two decades of the twentieth century, would be in the interest of such a class. The interventions of the Bretton Woods agencies and many of the Marcos technocrats have been nominally (and vocally) supportive of this type of transition.

Based on the historical record of the Philippines and despite the enormous application of resources and effort, doubts can be raised about the feasibility of such a transition. A Philippine economy that is capable of capital accumulation and self-propelled growth would still require fundamental changes in its internal structures and external relationships.

What appears to remain unaddressed in these 'technocratic' approaches is that it is actual people who must carry out development policies. An economic liberalisation programme directed toward private sector-led growth will not lead to significant change if the potential private sector that can respond with enterprise is too small. Attempting to provide peasants with 'competitive' prices for their produce, without increasing their control over the land, will not lead to capital investment in agriculture, but instead will expose the same peasants to the often debilitating control of money lenders, warehouse owners and travelling salesmen.

Many Bretton Woods-type reforms, designed with a studious avoidance of class analysis, in effect support the petty bourgeoisie against

the interests of the very wealthy and the politically powerful. However, the petty bourgeoisie would be the class with the least interest in responding to the private enterprise-oriented development programme implicit in such reforms, reforms whose liberalisation content almost always undermines the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

In the light of my formulations, while it would not be an impossible project, the transition project of the national bourgeoisie is less feasible than one carried out in the name of all the oppressed sectors simultaneously. The subsequent discussion will assume that this is the type of transition we are talking about and that during the transition the state is accountable to all these classes.

The need for a private sector

This section develops the proposition that a private sector is a necessary element of the mixed, transition economy. One way to justify such a role is that there might be some practicality in making temporary political compromises with property owners supportive of fundamental change. In contrast, in my analysis, the role of the private sector is derived from the importance of feudalism as a root cause of Philippine underdevelopment. A social class which has a material interest in developing productive forces has a distinctive role in overcoming such underdevelopment. The economic space in which such a social class will operate will be the 'private sector'.

The initial economic reforms required in the construction of the transition economy will create a genuine 'private sector'. One example of the feudal nature of the present Philippine private sector, as specified previously, is the Philippine Long Distance Company (PLDT), a private company created during the US colonial period which has the power, by its charter, to operate and maintain all telephone facilities in the country. When the government obtains official foreign assistance to expand telecommunications facilities it has to obtain the permission of the PLDT, a company listed in the New York Stock Exchange but with close relatives of President Aquino enjoying a controlling interest. PLDT is the oldest company of its type in the region, is very profitable and is inadequately serving the metro Manila area.

Agrarian reform, the nationalisation or the breakup of private monopolies, and the assertion of social control over foreign companies and natural monopolies will create a 'private sector' such as does not now exist in the Philippines.

A transition project being carried in the name of all oppressed groups would require structures of control and regulation over the non-govern-

mental sector. Surplus generated in private economic enterprises can be classified into two parts: that which arises from the internal efficiency of the enterprise; and that derived from the support and intervention of the state and from the exploitation of monopoly power.

That part of the surplus arising from the internal efficiency of the enterprise should be within the control of the owner of the enterprise. The limits of this control would be determined by the income taxation policies and social interventions in setting wage rates and other types of human compensation. That part of the surplus arising from state intervention should ultimately be returned to the social fund.

Cooperatives and popular enterprises can be expected to flower as an important segment of the non-governmental enterprises sector. The development of sustainable cooperatives and popular enterprises is both a strategy of empowerment and an intervention devoted to the creation of alternative economic structures.

In the agricultural areas, the economies of scope and scale in marketing and the purchasing of inputs are the most likely entry points for cooperatives. The government must provide legal and moral support as these cooperatives attempt to break through the oligopolised agricultural distribution system. As people gain confidence and experience in these enterprises the formation of production cooperatives can be expected. Within peoples' enterprises, members of cooperatives must obtain the skills in such areas as basic accounting, product grading and business planning.

Agrarian reform

Agrarian reform 'is perhaps the most fundamental structural reform which must be undertaken in the transition toward a mixed economy'.¹⁴ Within an alternative development programme, agrarian reform would be directed at a fundamental reform in social relations. This means that approaches such as land resettlement schemes, corporate stock ownership schemes and government enforced collectivisation are decidedly inferior options since these do not empower the intended beneficiaries of the agrarian reform programme.

The agricultural arrangements that exist in Philippine agriculture are diverse and require that a combination of different policies—land-rent reduction, tenancy reform, retention limits and state appropriation, cooperativisation and collectivisation—be part of the agrarian reform

¹⁴ See M A R Quisumbing, 'Agrarian reform alternatives for a mixed economy'. Working Paper, Quezon City: Philippine Center for Policy Studies, University of the Philippines, 21 September 1987.

programme. Here we need to point only to some of the sources of complexity. Increasing landlessness in many areas makes it difficult to identify beneficiaries under a simple 'land to the tiller' programme. The existence of plantations already run along capitalist lines, including those owned by multinational companies, would require a separate type of reform. The inadequate capabilities of beneficiaries to plant other crops, as in Negros, would require cooperativisation and collectivisation with state support in other areas.

The complexity of land reform highlights the fact that without peoples' organisations, Philippine society will be unable to carry out genuine agrarian reform. The need for the participation of these organisations demonstrates that any intentions to carry out agrarian reform independently of such groups are self-defeating.

Industrialisation

Within the alternative development strategy, it would be necessary for the state to play an active role in investment. My analysis suggests that state intervention is necessary to lead and to 'bend' investment priorities towards social requirements. The state must invest in social infrastructure and key industries on its own account.

Genuine agrarian reform would be necessary to reduce the alternative of low risk, high return investments in land. The reality of competition from the dominant industrial nations would, however, provide a bar to such dynamism. It would be necessary for the state to provide protection for the private sector.

The decisive difference with the mixed economy is that a strong and clear leadership role in investment would be exercised by a state not dominated by large business and landlord interests. This role would not mean that the state would undertake all, or even most investment. Rather, it would mean that protection, incentives and financing provided to the private sector would be operated according to their social purpose. A decisive control over the financial system would be necessary to control investment and suppress capital flight. My analysis provides some indication of the feasibility of direct state control over significant parts of the financial system, in view of its heavily cartelised nature and the sufficient supply of manpower for this purpose.¹⁵

¹⁵ The government-owned Philippine National Bank accounts for 30.4 per cent of all financial assets, while 'government-related institutions', meaning banks with government equity, account for 51.6 per cent of financial assets. Of the private financial institutions, the top 15 in terms of assets are owned and controlled by Filipino and Chinese elite families. The adequacy of skilled

It is important for present purposes to enunciate the principles on which investment choices within an alternative development programme would be made. The most important proposal is the sustained increase in domestic mass incomes. This is important for two reasons: first, it permits the internal market to provide the basis for industrialisation. Second, industrialisation is located, in the final analysis, not in physical machines, but in the skills of the population. Domestic income-based growth raises the educational and other resources needed to create and develop these industrial skills.

Foreign investment

At the level of principle, one can distinguish between existing foreign capital that has tended to penetrate the country through the capture of monopolistic positions and special accommodation from the state, and prospective foreign capital that might participate in support of a genuine development effort. It would be necessary to undertake a deliberate programme to assert social control over existing foreign capital through nationalisation (where economic activity is vital and the state has the managerial resources), partnership with the state and privatisation (Filipinisation, where private capabilities are sufficient). The Philippines have sufficient experience in these operations to provide some indication of feasibility.

Prospective foreign capital, when it can be drawn in, can provide both otherwise inaccessible technology and the potential for entry into new export markets.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show that any government seriously seeking to overcome Philippine underdevelopment must battle against entrenched interests that pervert development policies against the national interest.

The Aquino government was originally a coalition of the middle class, the uppermost stratum of Philippine society whose interests were put in jeopardy by the Marcos regime, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and that segment of the military establishment most disheartened by the growth of the insurgency.

The government has responded to challenges to its legitimacy made by

manpower is evident in a salary and compensation survey on financial institutions carried out by the Private Development Corporation of the Philippines, see IBON Databank, *The Philippine Financial System*, Manila, 1983 and R D Ferrer and M F Montes, 'Macroeconomic aspects of a mixed economy'.

the military and ambitious politicians by reducing the influence of the middle class in policy-making, cutting back on agrarian reform and reassuring the old business elite of its historical role in the economy, (for example, by assisting them in recovering assets that Marcos had sequestered). Stability has also been achieved by increasing dependence for financial accommodation and policy design on the Bretton Woods agencies.

Growth and stability have therefore been achieved by re-establishing, albeit under a non-dictatorial regime, economic management that is responsive to the needs of the large business groupings and is dependent on international financial accommodation for sustainability. As the Marcos years have shown, such a combination will prevent the Aquino government from overcoming the feudal and colonial bases of Philippine underdevelopment.

The toxic waste trade: international regulatory issues and options

The scandal in summer 1988 of the 'homeless' toxic waste ship, the *Karin-B*, only scratched the surface of a problem much deeper than was portrayed by the media (which suggested that a few rogue dealers were out for quick profits before better regulation excluded them). However, international trading in wastes has rapidly grown into a huge, diverse and complicated business, which makes it almost impossible to document and control the multifarious agents, consignments and deals involved.

A monitoring effort organised by Greenpeace identified more than 3.6 million tons of waste shipments from industrialised to under-developed countries between 1986 and 1988 alone.¹ As an indication of the further pressure for export, over 17.4 million tons per year – approaching the officially accepted figure for the total volume of toxic industrial wastes produced in the European Economic Community – have been proposed for shipment to developing countries, but then refused permission. These figures almost certainly underestimate the full picture. Hundreds of waste brokers, producers and shippers of varying levels of professionalism are trying to find disposal outlets for the ever-growing volumes of industrial country wastes. Tighter local environmental standards mean that these are more and more difficult (and expensive) to treat and dispose of in their country of origin. Despite these escalating disposal difficulties in industrial countries, the volumes of wastes produced continue to rise. Export to Third World countries seems to undermine the ability of tighter local disposal standards to force the reduction of harmful waste production in the first place.

Provoked by the intense efforts to export industrial society waste to their countries, forty developing countries have officially banned waste imports in the last two years, and yet more have rejected specific offers.²

¹ Greenpeace International, *The international trade in wastes*, Washington DC: Greenpeace International, several editions, 1988–89

² Figures from the UNEP Secretariat to the ad-hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts

despite the immense financial temptation borne of Third World debt and poverty. As one of many examples, the 1988 scandals exposed a deal to import 15 million tons of US and European pharmaceutical and tannery wastes into Guinea-Bissau, which was to receive 600 million dollars, more than four times the country's gross national product and twice its national debt.³ Proper disposal of the wastes in their countries of origin, however, would have cost ten to twenty times more.

Stricter environmental demands and increasing costs (in some countries public opposition has caused a virtual moratorium on new waste treatment and disposal sites) have only increased incentives for entrepreneurs to find outlets in poor, less industrialised countries where the necessary controls, regulatory infrastructure and public opinion are less developed. Even taking transport costs into account, potential profit margins have grown wide enough to attract many who have no professional commitment or expertise in good waste treatment and disposal. Easy credit under international financial deregulation may have encouraged opportunistic free entry, but lack of licensing and restriction of waste brokers has created the conditions that have allowed it to develop. In the circumstances it is not surprising to read the reactions of seasoned participants in development affairs:

for those who understand the historical context of Third World poverty, toxic dumping is just one more link in a chain of exploitation that has impoverished people throughout Africa and the Caribbean.⁴

Before 1988, attempts to regulate transfrontier shipments of hazardous wastes had been consigned to specific regions or groups such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the EEC, and were not designed to limit the trade in principle. In 1986 the EEC extended the 1984 Directive on the transfrontier movement of wastes between its member states to cover intra-EEC movements destined for exports outside the EEC. By 1988, however, only three countries had incorporated the Directive into national regulations.⁵

with a mandate to prepare a Global Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes, Geneva, 1988.

³ Greenpeace, *Waste Trade Update*, Washington DC: Greenpeace, 1 August 1988, p 5.

⁴ P Diven, 'Our newest hazardous export', Washington DC: Oxfam America, September 1988.

⁵ EEC, Council of Ministers, Council Directive 86/279/EEC, 12 June 1986, which amends Directive 84/631/EEC on the supervision and control within the European Community of the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste. *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 181/13 20, 4 July 1986.

OECD members signed a similar agreement in 1986.⁶ Several bills before the US Congress offered varying degrees of regulatory control over US waste exports.⁷ In addition, groups of neighbouring countries (such as the Organisation for African Unity, the Economic Community of West African States, the Caribbean Community, and the States of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic) as well as forty individual countries have passed resolutions or legislation against importation of wastes.⁸ In June 1988 the European Parliament joined with the African and Caribbean Parliamentary Association (ACP) in declaring support for a ban on international waste trading.

In response to the international outcry (especially from poor countries targeted as potential waste recipients) the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) sponsored the establishment of a Global Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.⁹ This provided a meeting ground for over 100 advanced industrial countries (potential exporters and importers) and less industrialised countries (who were mostly potential importers), which resulted in eighteen months of intense negotiation and several formal drafting meetings. Industrialised countries, by and large, wished to see international waste trading free to develop as a commercial activity (and service fulfilling national environmental standards); poor countries wished to see such trade banned or very strictly limited. Drafts wavered between discouragement of the waste trade as intrinsically undesirable, strict regulation of standards whilst defending its legitimacy and development, and the creation of an apparently regulatory shell too weak to bite into dubious practices. The Basel Convention ended UNEP negotiations in March 1989, but in a confused and unsatisfactory manner which left major loopholes and disagreements unresolved. The Convention is analysed in some depth later in this article.

The fundamental issue is whether the problems can be adequately contained by establishing conventions which deal with notification, prior consent from receiver countries, documentary description of wastes and so on, or whether more direct pressure should be applied. This would involve a ban on waste exports, requiring wastes to be

⁶ OECD, 'Exports of hazardous wastes from the OECD area', recommendation adopted 5 June 1986, c (86) 64. See also *OECD and the Environment*, Paris: OECD, 1986, pp 78-89 and *Trans-frontier Movements of Hazardous Wastes*, Paris: OECD, 1985.

⁷ *Waste Trade Update*, 1 August 1988. See also the US EPA *Report of Audit on EPA's Program to Control Exports of Hazardous Waste*, EID37 05 0456 80855, Washington DC, 31 March 1988.

⁸ *Africa News*, 11 July 1988. *Reuter News reports*, 27 July 1988. *Waste Trade Update*, 1 September 1988.

⁹ UNEP 1988: 89 (see footnote 2)

managed in the country or area of their production. This approach is favoured by environmentalists among others, who argue that conventions of the UNEP kind, and the approach of the EEC and OECD grant legitimacy to an expanding global trade in wastes. This in turn removes any pressure to deal with the underlying need to control toxic wastes at the point of production.¹⁰ Pro-export interests argue that a ban on waste trading would not only deprive poor countries of a means to earn hard currencies, but that the lack of clear distinctions between toxic wastes and raw materials which may be imported for recycling as inputs to industrial processes would also curtail waste management technology transfer and discourage other industrial development. To ban the former would also catch the latter.

This perspective treats wastes as essentially similar to other commodities, arguing that free markets ensure overall efficiency and equity. There are two structural aspects that it does not address. First, wastes, unlike goods, are not exchanged for payment (payment in the disposal service goes with the waste): no one has a direct self-interest in its arrival at a properly designated treatment and disposal site.¹¹ Second, wastes are inherently difficult to define, especially when they can be claimed to be free from hazardous waste regulation as inputs to recycling or other processes.

In this article I shall review some cases of waste-trading and analyse systematic patterns in this activity. A structural model of the general system of waste production, handling, and final disposal (what I call hazardous waste life-cycles) is needed to define the uncertainties and regulatory options. A sketch of such a model is described more fully elsewhere.¹² Current regulatory initiatives are then described and analysed against the foregoing structural analysis. Finally, it is suggested that when one takes into account the scale and particular quality of the uncertainties in hazardous waste life-cycles, the only viable regulatory strategy is one which focuses more attention on the point of production of the wastes and on better ordering of the badly-defined organisational milieux that make up waste life-cycles and their risks. Attempting to control wastes properly by relying almost totally upon documentary notification systems is unrealistic, because such a policy

¹⁰ See, for example, the statement of Greenpeace to the fourth drafting meeting of the UNEP ad-hoc working group, Geneva November 1988, and the first issue of the ITWAN newsletter, January 1989.

¹¹ The definition issue is analysed more fully in B Wynne, *Risk Management and Hazardous Wastes. Implementation and the dialectics of credibility*, London/Berlin/New York: Springer Verlag, 1987.

¹² B Wynne, *Risk Management and Hazardous Wastes*, chapter 3.

does not recognise the insuperable indeterminacies in defining hazardous wastes, and is based upon naively simple models of actual waste life-cycles. Export ban proposals have lacked details of how they would be structured and implemented. Whatever else is done, there is an urgent need to simplify this indeterminate morass, which is independent from, but also an adjunct to, an export ban.

International waste trade: an overview

The *Karin-B* was commissioned by the Italian government in 1988 to reload the degenerating cocktail of Italian industrial toxic wastes which was discovered at an illicit dump in Nigeria. Five shiploads (amounting to nearly 4,000 tons) from unidentified companies were dumped between August 1987 and May 1988. Proper destruction would have cost about US\$4 million. A Nigerian in the port of Koko simply rented his backyard for 100 dollars per month to an Italian businessman who then made it into a site for the storage of 8,000 drums of waste, including highly toxic Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs). The Nigerian government jailed about fifty people and seized an innocent Italian freighter, which it refused to release until the wastes were cleared.¹³

The *Karin-B* was refused entry to ports in Spain, France, Britain, West Germany and the Netherlands, creating a storm of public protest everywhere. Eventually the Italian government accepted responsibility for the rejected cargo, but even then local citizens, workers and municipalities in likely ports of entry organised mass protests and blockades. Entry at the government's choice, Livorno, was refused by the harbour authorities when toxic wastes were shown to be leaking from the ship. The ship then moved to anchor off the port of Ravenna. Although unloading began on 20 December 1988, the final treatment and disposal of the wastes has not yet been resolved. Another ship, the *Deepsea Carrier*, followed the *Karin-B* into protests and refusals at Italian ports with a second load of wastes from the Koko dump, and further loads were still needed to complete the removal.

The clean-up costs from Koko are roughly four times that for the *Karin-B* (\$40-50 million, or over \$1,000 per ton of waste). This cost only represents removal from the illegal dump back to the country of origin. It does not yet include proper treatment and disposal, which could double the price; the Italian government does not know which

¹³ This case history is drawn from *Greenpeace Waste Trade Update*, 15 January 1988, and several press sources.

companies are responsible for the wastes and original deals. All these factors (and the extra costs in terms of international aggravation, social conflict and unknown environmental and health damage) can be measured against the cost of gathering comprehensive organised knowledge of waste production and more active intervention 'upstream' to ensure their routing to proper treatment and disposal. This cost is regarded by governments everywhere as being too high.

The *Khian Sea* carried 14,000 tons of incinerator ash from Philadelphia, USA, in August 1986. Incinerator residues can contain high levels of dioxins and other toxic combustion products, as well as heavy metals. The *Khian Sea* made an unsuccessful attempt to off-load its cargo in the Bahamas.¹⁴ It then moved on to the Caribbean, where it was resisted at several ports until, in January 1988, it began unloading in Haiti, under a manifest describing its cargo as fertiliser. The *Khian Sea* was discovered and ordered to reload and leave, but 4,000 tons of the incinerator ash were abandoned on a beach. In June 1988 the ship crossed the Atlantic still loaded with about 10,000 tons of waste, and arrived in Yugoslavia for repairs in July. While there the ship changed its name to the *Felicia*, the owners claiming that they had sold it to a company called Romo Shipping. This company was established in the Caribbean just before the claimed transaction. The life-history of the waste had thus been complicated further purely by commercial fiat on paper.

In late September 1988 the *Khian Sea* (now *Felicia*) headed through the Suez Canal for the Philippines. On the way it was thwarted when it attempted to unload its waste cargo for disposal at a landfill site in Sri Lanka. It then continued to Indonesia, where the environment minister refused a large offer from a foreign broker, asserting that 'Indonesia will never allow any industrial country to dump its waste here.'¹⁵ By November 1988, however, the *Felicia* had arrived off Singapore with empty holds and another new name, the *Pelicano*. The captain denied having dumped at sea, but refused to say where he had unloaded.

Wherever the Philadelphia wastes finished their twenty-seven-month odyssey, the responsibility for the resultant losses (estimated at over \$3 million) is still unresolved. The original waste producer, the city of Philadelphia, denies any responsibility by arguing that it entered into a 'good faith' contract with a waste disposal firm, and that the issue lies between that firm and the companies it hired. The city is demanding

¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also 'Toxic waste dumping in the Third World', *Race and Class*, 30 (3) 1989, pp 47-56.

¹⁵ Quoted in *Waste Trade Update*, 15 January 1988.

proof from the waste company that it disposed of the wastes legally before it will pay. Whilst the ship was crossing the Atlantic the waste company concerned obtained a US court injunction requiring the supposed owners of the (then) *Khian Sea* to notify them, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the US Court at least three days before disposal of the waste. The shipping company argued that it did not fail to comply with this injunction, because its sale of the ship to another firm cleared it of any legal liability. The judge, nevertheless, indicated that this argument would probably be rejected.¹⁶ Meanwhile, despite public protests and official promises, the 4,000 tons of waste ash dumped in Haiti remain there abandoned.

In many other deals wastes from industrialised countries have been dumped in Third World countries under false descriptions such as 'raw materials for bricks' or 'building aggregate', at around a tenth or less of the cost of proper treatment and disposal. The organisational chains of miscellaneous actors have usually been tortuous, secretive and haphazard.

In 1988 a transfer station was proposed in Brooklyn, New York City, to transfer asbestos from trucks to shiploads for export to Guatemala.¹⁷ The sponsoring firm claimed that the asbestos was to be recycled as an input to brake manufacturing. Technically defined as goods, it was not subject to regulation under US waste control laws. The shipment volumes were to be 1,000 cubic metres per day, but sceptical environmental groups noted that this was far more than current or foreseeable levels needed for brake manufacture. Furthermore, the material concerned was most probably from a clean up under tightened standards relating to asbestos and, as such, not fit for manufacturing use. The label 'Export for brake manufacturing' was suspected to be a cover for the dumping of wastes that have become virtually untouchable in the climate of US public reaction.

In June 1988, 600 barrels that had begun to leak on a wharf in Bangkok were found to contain toxic wastes. They had lain unclaimed and ignored for years, having been addressed to non-existent Thai firms. The US magazine, *Time*, claimed on 4 July 1988 that Singapore companies had been illegally sending chemical wastes to Thailand since 1981.

Another ill-fated Italian waste export scheme also involved four conti-

¹⁶ R Dowden, 'Bribes and poverty that are poisoning Africa', *The Independent* (London), 17 June 1988.

¹⁷ *Greenpeace Waste Trade Update*, 15 January 1988.

nents and three separate ships carrying the same waste cargo, with over fourteen months of indeterminate seeking for a convenient dump.¹⁸ The ship concerned, the *Lynx*, eventually arrived back in the same port from which the wastes had originally set sail, three ships, four continents, unknown environmental effects and fourteen months earlier. In the meantime the wastes had been out of the control of any responsible authorities, and a dispute continues about who owns them and their associated liabilities.

These are only a small number of many recent examples identified largely through the unofficial efforts of journalists and environmentalist networks such as that coordinated by the International Toxic Waste Action Network (ITWAN).¹⁹ The primitive state of national and international regulations and norms means that countless shipments can be assumed to have passed unnoticed, whilst the legality of many of those exposed is unclear.

A case in point is that of the Sesco Company of London, or an apparently associated company, Hamilton Resources of Gibraltar, which was aired on a Channel 4 television programme in Britain in February 1989. Sesco organised a contract with the Benin government to import 5 million tons of European wastes per year to a prospective landfill site selected by a third party, a waste consultancy company. It was claimed that the wastes would cause no harm to human health, animals or the environment. When data on the wastes was obtained, they were found to include herbicides and other organochlorine compounds, degreasing and other solvents, a toxic inventory which should be disposed of by controlled high temperature incineration. Sesco had apparently first obtained the cheap outlet for wastes, then sold its capacity to waste brokers all over Europe. In so doing they elaborated the complicated tangle of transfers and transformations even further, making it almost impossible to determine where in the multiple system of ownerships and handlings a proper description of the wastes was lost, and whether or not it was done deliberately.

It is a significant comment upon the EEC Transfrontier Directive that this deal, like others, was enacted under the Directive's nose, yet its inadequacies were exposed by the transitory attention of the media, not by properly resourced and empowered institutions. When this deal was publicised the company and the Benin government declared that it had

¹⁸ O Ayadike, 'Toxic Terrorism', *West Africa*, 20 June 1988, pp 1108-9, 1144-6.

¹⁹ ITWAN involves Greenpeace, the African NGOs' Environmental Network (Nairobi), the Environmental Liaison Centre (Nairobi), the International Organisation of Consumers' Unions (Malaysia), and the Natural Resources Defence Council (Washington DC).

been cancelled, though the TV programme claimed it had evidence to the contrary. Several other deals have been denied or cancelled once exposed to publicity, but it is difficult to tell whether the cancellation is genuine or whether the companies concerned are waiting until attention has moved on.

Several important features are illustrated by the cases outlined above. It is impossible to control and unify fully the definition of exported wastes, even though an accurate description is central to adequate control.²⁰ Even between rich, technically advanced countries, customs officials have neither the expertise, time nor resources to check even a small proportion of the consignments of wastes, or wastes recorded as goods or resources, that cross frontiers every day. Harmonisation of the different national waste definitions has been a major preoccupation of international bodies such as the EEC and the OECD for several years. However, it will be demonstrated later that this challenge is more difficult than has been recognised hitherto.

Even where countries have attempted to establish a comprehensive wastes tracking system, they are limited in their effect by the sheer complexity of many waste transactions. For example a 'cradle-to-grave' documentation system with 'prior informed consent' is supposed to prevail in the EEC. A waste producer should send prenotification to the authorities in the receiver and transit countries, specifying the amount and type of wastes to be shipped, the means of shipment and the receiving facility. Shipment is not supposed to take place until documentary consent is received from the country of destination (if within the EEC) or the last EEC country of dispatch (if the destination is outside the EEC). Thus, the system, which does not apply to countries outside the EEC, ends at the EEC's border.²¹ Even within the EEC there is evidence that it is followed incompletely, and that identifying infringement of the system is haphazard.

Related to the key problem of controlling and unifying waste definitions is the fact that the connections between waste production and

²⁰ Thus, for example, a report observed that 'many of the offers made to Caribbean nations' not divulge vital information on the nature of the wastes or else the information is distorted the hope of duping inexperienced officials'. See *Latin American Monitor*, 'The temptations toxic dumping', November 1988, p 593. The incinerator ash aboard the *Khian Sea* was variously described as 'non-toxic, non-hazardous ash', 'general material', 'bulk construction material' and 'topsoil ash fertiliser'. The European Chemicals Industry Federation (CEFIC) has avowed that information regarding the generation of exported wastes should remain confidential to protect industry, and even research on the issue should be eliminated, leaving only information obtained by interested parties. European Report, 5 October 1988, cited in *Greenpeace World Trade Update*, 15 January 1988.

²¹ EEC, Directive 86/279/EEC, 12 June 1986.

disposal are shaped by the commercial activities and interests of multi-farious middlemen and broking and shipping firms. The incidence of direct deals between waste producers and disposal companies is decreasing, whilst the use of brokers is increasing. Many of these brokers may be primarily concerned with other affairs, and only tangentially involved in the particular demands of handling hazardous chemicals. They may well be non-specialists and unfamiliar with detailed regulatory requirements and codes of practice. Although many middlemen are stable, open and technically-competent companies, the apparent availability of profits, unrestricted by such regulations as licences, leaves the field wide open to invasion. Recent examples include arms dealers, former mercenaries, advertising agents, property agents, even a local beer distributor and the King of Tonga's daughter.²²

The EEC's documentary system notwithstanding, present regulation is focused almost entirely on the very end of hazardous waste life-cycles. Attention is placed on final disposal activities and sites, and hardly at all with the actors and transactions that precede the arrival of a waste consignment at such sites. The start of waste life-cycles, the 'upstream', is very weakly controlled and badly defined. Even in relatively well-developed regulatory systems there is very little systematic knowledge of the creation of wastes: their chemical composition, volume, routine variations, physical forms, and locations; there is even less knowledge of the various kinds of waste brokers and their activities. The latter use their entrepreneurial talent to take wastes at a negotiated price from producers, then try to find ways of using them or combining them as resources for other processes. Alternatively (or if their commercial risks go wrong and they find a recycling outlet blocked), they may 'play the market' to locate the cheapest possible disposal outlet, whether at home or abroad. Freedom to enhance overall efficiency through such activities as recycling goes hand in hand with freedom to avoid the best practice. This general lack of definition, structure and control earlier in the life-cycle has been the source of problems and criticisms even when wastes are entirely managed in their national system of origin.²³

²² The firm involved in the Koko Nigeria deal was a construction firm which had decided to diversify into the more lucrative chemical waste business under a licence to import materials for the 'building trade'. Other experts note 'the shadowy nature of the organisations involved in organising the toxic trade', and their ability to dissolve rapidly to escape liabilities. O Ayadike, 'Toxic terrorism'.

²³ See, for example, D Laurence and B Wynne, 'Regionalised waste management: a critique of current proposals', evidence to the UK House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, *Toxic Waste 2*, Minutes of Evidence, London: HMSO, 1989, pp 621-9; and B Wynne, *Risk management and hazardous wastes*.

These features—disordered and commercially determined waste life-cycles; trivial entry costs for all comers; end-of-cycle regulatory focus; incoherent waste definitions; lack of incentive to receive wastes—if combined into a more composite view of the waste issue, emphasise the vast and unrecognised escalation in uncontrollability which is brought about by the internationalising of the commercial waste trade.

Hazardous waste life-cycles

The most important characteristic of the solid waste issue, compared to conventional waste disposal by environmental dispersion directly at the production site, is that it is packaged and handled, therefore dispersed, not only by environmental processes, but by human agents. The waste producer usually contracts with a waste broker to collect, transport, treat and dispose of the wastes. As the ownership of the waste and the attached liabilities for any environmental damage becomes more complicated, so does regulatory control over where it goes and how it is to be treated.

Even this, however, is a simple picture when compared to many typical waste life-cycles. Waste brokers take different wastes from many sources. It is usual for them to be stored or treated at transfer stations, most often by bulking up but also by being mixed with other waste streams and then repackaged. The first broker may 'sell' some wastes to a second broker, who may be a specialist in dealing with particular types of waste or particular countries. Some wastes may become resources (and thus no longer need to be regulated) merely by dint of changing hands to a company which knows where recycling possibilities exist, or that gambles on a future rise in the market value of extracted materials. Solvents, oils, or filter-cakes containing cadmium, silver or copper are all examples of 'wastes' which can suddenly be transformed into 'goods' by this process. Waste booking is a field requiring high levels of skill, commitment and organisation, yet it is open to anyone to offer their services and undercut the competition.

Thus, many wastes actually experience transformation during their life-cycle. But these changes, which also involve changes in the hazards they impose, are due to human actions and transactions that can be as immediate as who owns the material. Furthermore, the uncertainties in their management are not strict uncertainties, in the sense of some imprecision around a certain baseline. They are more properly described as indeterminacies, ultimately shaped by an ill-defined and shifting pot-

pourri of commercial operators within different social, organisational and cultural climates and inconsistent technical regimes. To call all this 'uncertainty' is to exaggerate the extent to which it is controllable.

The hazardous waste life-cycle is not merely uncertain; it is open-ended. Most regulatory systems try to control the hazards by licensing sites for final disposal or destruction, but allow producers and brokers a free hand as long as they take wastes to any one of many such legally licensed sites. The site licence may prohibit certain kinds of waste from disposal on that site, for example solvents on landfills, but few systems, if any, dictate that particular waste streams have to be treated and disposed of in specific ways and at specific sites. Such active regulation 'upstream' in the waste life-cycle would require that regulators gain more systematic and detailed knowledge of waste production in their area, and it would require the creation of powers to direct particular wastes to particular treatment and disposal facilities. This, of course, would introduce conflict with the 'system efficiency' principle, which states that owners know their wastes and the opportunities to optimise disposal or re-use. On the other hand, even without international trading, the regulator needs some adequately structured system which clearly defines when to intervene before control over waste movement is effectively lost.

In addition to disposal site licensing, most industrial countries operate a documentary notification system which is supposed to record the full life-cycle of a waste consignment 'from cradle to grave'. Indeed, along with the requirement for site licensing, this is the corner stone of the European regulatory system for control of toxic wastes. However, this form of regulation is limited, and has been viewed by regulators themselves more as a mechanism for gaining much-needed data. In theory, the prior-informed consent requirement built into the consignment note system provides direct control over the location of wastes for treatment and disposal.

The regulatory effectiveness of prenotification depends critically upon accurate and common waste definitions, so that the regulators and other actors know what they are due to receive. It depends upon genuine prenotification (as opposed to informally-condoned slippage which results in loads arriving at disposal sites before, or with, their 'prenotification'), and upon the practical ability of customs officials and regulatory authorities to check the nature of loads and the accuracy of documents, by means including chemical analysis where necessary. On this latter point it is worth recalling the OECD's 1983 estimate that a hazardous

waste consignment crosses a member-state frontier on average more than once every five minutes, twenty-four hours per day, 365 days per year.²⁴ These figures represent the period before the rapid growth in international trading of wastes, and informal current estimates are higher still.²⁵ It is inconceivable that the human resources to inspect and analyse even a tiny fraction of such volumes of transfrontier shipments could be mustered; and even if they were, the result would be paralysis.

Experts in the field acknowledge that the greatest check on the nature of waste consignments comes from the receiver, who normally has a vested interest in ensuring that he is not being handed more toxic or difficult wastes than his plant is capable of treating, or that he is being paid for. However, a key point is that this crucial unofficial control is removed when one considers movements not between industrial countries, but from industrial to non-industrial countries.

There are two dimensions to the fundamental and pivotal problem of common definitions of waste consignments. One is the discretion which handlers within a single regulatory system's legal criteria have to define the same materials in different ways and vary their regulatory status; another is the discrepancy between official definitions used by different national systems. We have already noted that hazardous waste life-cycles are often tortuously complex and open-ended. 'Cradle to grave' waste tracking becomes strictly impossible when a waste broker, often for quite legitimate reasons, mixes a waste with others, or re-defines the waste as resource 'goods'. Such handling and intermediate treatment also produces new waste streams. Thus, brokers or transfer stations are often the graveyard of waste in one form, and the birthplace of new wastes and combinations. I have already emphasised that even a paper change of ownership, unaccompanied by physical or chemical changes, can alter the nature of a material from waste to goods, or from hazardous to non-hazardous, or vice-versa. Regulatory statutes and obligations change with these changes of definition. The various discontinuities make it impossible to track the life-cycle of many wastes from cradle to grave. The usual way of dealing with this is for transfer stations to raise new consignment notes as new waste producers, with the result that such operators became both 'graves' and 'cradles'. Even retrospective tracing of wastes to their original producer, let alone real-time (that is, preventative) control, becomes practically impossible. In

²⁴ OECD, *Transfrontier Movements of Hazardous Wastes*, 1985.

²⁵ Private communication with OECD officials, January 1989.

addition, the fear of being carved out means that it is in the broker's self interest not to disclose the identity of producer and disposer to each other.

The hazards created by wastes are influenced by autonomous commercial actors defining and handling the materials in unknown numbers of private interactions, which are only indirectly influenced by regulators. In these circumstances uniformly applied waste definitions and descriptions and accurate documentation of comprehensive waste life-cycles seem unlikely eventualities. Yet they are the cornerstone of the policy defending a free market.

The common policy response to the indeterminate, multi-actor structure of waste life-cycles is that they can be more tightly controlled by making more precise and consistent definitions of hazardous wastes. The OECD's effort has been devoted to developing a schedule of waste definitions which would allow harmonisation amongst member states, so that consignments could not simply 'go missing' because they were defined as hazardous in one state but not in another. The EEC has formally proposed to adopt the elaborate and complex OECD definitions after finding that a much more simple but less precise list was unsatisfactory as a means of controlling practical waste definitions and descriptions.²⁶ I shall argue below that this attempt to plug loopholes by tightening technical definitions is misconceived, and that allowing the expansion of this international market only increases the costs of the inevitable failure to achieve impossible regulatory targets.

Even within a relatively homogenous community such as the EEC, differences in national definitions of hazardous wastes cannot be dissolved merely by unifying each country's technical definitions, as these embody institutional assumptions or realities particular to that country.²⁷ For example, the Netherlands uses precise quantified concentration limits for three classes of chemical constituents of a waste stream. If a waste contains any listed chemical above its specified limit, it is legally controlled under the Dutch Chemical Waste regulations concerning notifications and licensed facilities. In the UK, however, such precise and inflexible definitions are unpopular with policy-makers because they rule out the use of local negotiation and discretion to tailor waste management decisions to variable circumstances. Such informal discretionary judgement is a general feature of UK

²⁶ H Yakowitz, 'Harmonisation of specific descriptors of special wastes subject to national controls in eleven OECD countries', OECD, *Transfrontier Movements of Hazardous Wastes*, 1985, pp 50-81.

²⁷ This is analysed at length in B Wynne, *Risk Management and Hazardous Wastes*.

regulation, reflecting deep-seated institutional and cultural traditions. Likewise, the Dutch use of standard, precise and inflexible criteria reflects general traditions of greater formalism and concern for accountability.²⁸

Other technical differences occur: for example, in the way that the USA specifies hundreds of precise chemical constituents of hazardous wastes, whereas European systems commonly use a much shorter list of generic, imprecise terms such as 'solvents' or 'biocides'. In addition the USA is much more concerned to specify in great detail the tests which waste producers or handlers must perform to determine whether a waste falls under the regulations. The US elutriate procedure (the EP test) defines whether a waste is considered to pose too high a risk of leaching toxic chemicals into groundwater. The US system specifies over twenty laboratory method rules that must be followed for this key hazard test. The equivalent UK criteria cover different characteristics from the US leaching test, because the critical practical exposure scenario chosen by the regulators is different: in the UK it has been that of children gaining access to a landfill site and ingesting some of the waste. As well as using a different criterion of toxicity in the UK, no methodological rules are given to control such tests and the waste handler is advised to contact the producer, regulator or other larger waste firms to agree, within rather imprecise margins, the hazard status of the waste. In effect, the UK trusts the institutional actors, including the waste handler, to be competent and operate a high degree of self-regulation. Although it is important not to overstate the point, this 'local' institutional culture determines important aspects of technical definitions and standards in each national system. It is thus unrealistic to expect standardisation to occur.

Technical risk assessments and evaluations of whether a waste is hazardous depend critically upon institutional assumptions about the social actors who will handle it 'downstream'. For example, a cyanide-containing waste can be considered relatively low-risk if we assume that it is never mixed with acid (thus releasing deadly hydrogen cyanide gas), is kept dehydrated (so that it cannot dissolve in water and leach), and always in sealed drums. Whether or not (and where) these or like processes do occur markedly alters the hazards. Even relatively innocuous materials such as household wastes may result in high risks if they

²⁸ *Ibid.* The cultural gap underlying these apparently small technical details is hinted at in a British regulator's private description (May 1985) of the Dutch system of definitions as 'a system that could be run by monkeys'.

are handled badly by 'downstream' actors. Organisations and people, not only physical processes, are crucial.

Thus, technical regulations and risk assessments are riddled with assumptions and commitments about who will handle the wastes, how undefined intermediate actors will define and handle them and deal with other actors. Truck drivers, waste broking firms, shipping agents and crews, dockers, customs officials, regulatory inspectors, waste producers, recycling plants and entrepreneurs, and treatment and disposal facility operators are among those who affect the fate of innumerable and vastly diverse waste consignments. The whole hazard system is extremely ill-defined and under-determined, prone to uncontrolled behaviour from somewhere within the complex system.

Hazardous waste management is of a different order of difficulty from conventional risk and pollution problems (which are centred on a single emission point) precisely because of the socially dispersed, indeterminate and ill-defined nature of the risk systems in question. The lack of definition which so undermines adequate regulation is not due to technical uncertainty or imprecision, but to crippling social and institutional variation and indeterminacy, some of which can be reduced by available policy measures.

Policy responses

The OECD and the EEC initiatives to regulate transfrontier waste trading focused on inter-member state movements, stimulated by the furore throughout Europe in 1983 when barrels containing dioxin-contaminated wastes from the clean-up of the Seveso accident went missing. They were eventually discovered in a covert store in France, having been illegally imported under a false description. The European Directive on the transfrontier movement of hazardous wastes was rushed into existence in the heat of this public controversy.²⁹ As I have explained, prenotification had to include an accurate description of the waste which accorded with official definitions annexed to the Directive. Documentary confirmation of despatch and arrival of the waste consignment at the designated facility had to be provided to receiving, transit and exporting authorities, thus in theory closing the circuit and completing the 'cradle-to-grave' regulatory framework. In 1986 the OECD adopted an almost identical agreement amongst member states.³⁰

²⁹ EEC Directive 84/631/EEC, 6 December 1984, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, 13 November 1984, 1326/31 39.

³⁰ See OECD, 1986 in note 6.

In practice there have been considerable difficulties with the EEC trans-frontier Directive, especially relating to different interpretations of hazardous waste definitions, and variable descriptions of consignments. In practice, waste life-cycles are more complicated and ambiguous than the formal regulatory framework assumes. This is a major, if only privately recognised, factor in the failure of the Directive to have any moral authority with its supposed implementers. The 1984 Directive had to be amended three times, the most important change being in 1986.³¹ This amendment was supposed to be implemented by January 1987, but the absence of standard EEC hazardous waste definitions led to dissatisfaction about its practicality and an informal agreement amongst member states to delay implementation until a common framework could be established. This resulted in a proposed further amendment to the 1978 Directive on member states' regulation of toxic and dangerous waste, which brought in the elaborate OECD 'translation' system of definitions.³² This is expected to be formally agreed in 1989.

Conflicts have continued between members of the EEC over the scope of regulations, for example, whether they should include solvents and materials for recycling. There has also been some uncertainty over the interpretation of a receiving authority's right to refuse or merely acknowledge an impending transfrontier shipment. Belgium, in fact, broke ranks with the consensus and implemented the 1986 Directive in late 1987, in order to underpin its own national ban on imports, which was introduced in early 1987.

The European Commission itself, as the executive body responsible for coordinating implementation and enforcement of Directives, is dependent upon national authorities to report to it in due course. It has, therefore, little direct knowledge of the degree of implementation of these controls in practice. In the USA, the EPA is supposed, under existing laws, to be notified of intended exports and to be given confirmation that the receiving facilities are capable of proper treatment and disposal of the wastes. In Congressional Hearings in July 1988, the EPA Inspector General testified that many consignments were known to have been exported without any such notification, and that the programme was 'in shambles'.³³ The European equivalent, if it comes into being, may

³¹ EEC Directive 86/279/EEC, 1986.

³² EC proposal to amend the 1978 Directive 78/319/EEC on toxic and dangerous wastes, 11 August 1988.

³³ US House of Representatives, hearings before the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee, Washington DC, 14 July 1988.

escape a parallel demise, but there is good reason for concern when it is not one but twelve different countries that are involved.

The OECD agreement has the benefit of coordination with the EEC, but does not have the latter's legal powers. Both the OECD and the EEC, however, still officially regard a free, regulated international market in wastes as legitimate and desirable and in the interests of commercial equity and efficiency. Their efforts are, therefore, devoted entirely to ensuring that participants exercise due care in this international trade. No attempt is made to regulate its volume, organisational complexity or geopolitical reach.

In 1987 the UN Environment Programme convened a group of technical experts with a mandate to draft a global convention to regulate international trading in wastes, for signature by March 1989. The group first met in Budapest in October 1987, and further meetings culminated in the Conventions in Basel and Geneva in March 1989. The early versions of the Convention envisaged a simplified, globalised system of notification along the lines of the EEC and OECD models, with no pressure to reduce or modify commercial trading of waste. However, the adverse publicity during 1988, and the resolutions against imports from industrial countries by groupings of poor countries under financial pressure to receive wastes, was supplemented by pressure from the European Parliament, the IMF and the World Bank.³⁴ These forces combined to put onto the agenda stronger proposals to restrict or ban all export of hazardous wastes. The director of UNEP, Mustafa Tolba, also gave the drafting group clear signals of his own preferences when he observed in the run up to the 1988 Geneva meeting that 'the most effective way of protecting human and environmental health from hazards posed by toxic wastes is the complete banning of the movement of such wastes away from their origin'.³⁵

Although it covered less than half the Articles, the Luxembourg UNEP meeting reached a certain level of apparent agreement, and expectations were that the Convention would be completed and signed into being by March 1989 in Basel, Switzerland.

However, irreconcilable disagreements which had only been partly

³⁴ European Parliamentary resolution, Brussels, May 1988. A meeting of the Council of Ministers in June rejected a proposal from the Netherlands for a ban on the export of wastes from Europe, however. *IMF Survey*, 1988, p 330, 'Ministers urge increased resources transfer, citing unevenness of global expansion.'

³⁵ Cited in Greenpeace statement to the November 1988 Geneva meeting of UNEP Global Convention Working Group.

negotiated between industrial nations and developing countries erupted again between Luxembourg and Basel. Due to intense time pressure, the extra Basel and Geneva negotiating and drafting meetings were fragmented into sub-committees on different topics, and plenary debating sessions were suspended. The conclusions of the unrepresentative sub-committees were deemed by the Chair to be sovereign. The result of these extraordinary procedures was a significantly weaker final version than that which had been taking shape at Luxembourg.

The formal resolution to reduce international waste trade to a minimum is without substance unless the means to exert practical pressure at the right points in the system is agreed. This pressure is unlikely without several improvements. In the meantime, neither of the adversaries in the negotiations appear to be happy with the Convention as it now exists. The USA, UK and West Germany, the leading industrial countries, withheld signature apparently because they feared it was too restrictive,³⁶ whilst the African nations do not believe that the treaty is strict enough and refused to sign at least until an Organisation for African Unity meeting in June 1989. The Netherlands proposed a separate motion that attracted support from over thirty nations, which immediately pledged cut-backs in toxic waste exports.

The existing situation is therefore confused and uncertain, despite UNEP's best efforts. Even if the existing Convention were universally endorsed, it contains several ambiguities and loopholes which allow questionable toxic waste trade arrangements to continue legally, as well as elements which weaken its ability to define, control and penalise illegal or unsatisfactory practices. It is necessary to examine the key provisions of the final version produced in Basel, now known as the Basel Convention, 1989, which are stated below.

1. Any contracting country (a signatory to the Convention) may exercise a total or partial prohibition of hazardous waste import, and all other contracting parties must respect this prohibition.
2. A system of prenotification and prior consent from the transit and importing authorities similar to the EEC and OECD frameworks.

³⁶ It would be far too simple to assume that all industrialised countries share a common interest in a weak Convention. For example, with a cheap and relatively easy landfill and well developed treatment industry, the UK is not a significant waste exporter at present (unlike the USA). Were public opinion to harden against landfill, the UK position could change, but its current concern with the Convention is the unresolved issue of the international shipping norm of the right of innocent passage if transit through third party territory waters becomes subject to prior consent

3. In the absence of notified consent from a proposed import country, waste must not be shipped from the proposed export country (a no-export default rule).
4. No exports to or imports from non-contracting countries are allowed under Article 4. (This seems to be directly contradicted by Article 11.)
5. Article 4's requirements, leaky though they are (see 6 below), are undermined and potentially negated by Article 11, which allows toxic waste trade between contracting and non-contracting countries to the Convention 'so long as they do not derogate from environmentally sound management as intended under the Convention'. This standard is nowhere specified, so countries are free to make deals with anyone and to define them as 'sound' within very permissive limits.
6. In the Luxembourg version, exporting countries were obliged to ensure 'the availability of adequate disposal facilities for the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes whatever the place of their disposal; to the extent possible those facilities should be located within their own territories' (Article 4, 2b). Two following clauses required trans-frontier shipments to be reduced to a minimum 'consistent with the environmentally sound and efficient management of hazardous wastes', and that export should be prohibited where the exporting country 'has reason to believe that the wastes in question will not be managed in an environmentally sound manner'. In the final version this was reduced to a much weaker requirement for the parties to agree that disposal under an export deal would be according to 'environmentally sound management'.

These clauses are crucial for determining the limits of legally-acceptable international shipments of hazardous wastes, and thus deserve closer scrutiny. For example, the last clause refers to negotiation between the contracting countries as to what counts as an 'environmentally sound manner'. Even within Europe there is no agreed definition of 'adequate' treatment and disposal facilities. Differences in European standards--for example the UK's defence of landfill co-disposal of toxic wastes with household wastes--are justified on grounds of local hydrogeological differences; similar local factors could be used to justify landfill in remote Third World countries as 'adequate' unless more precise definitions of such terms are included. Another apparently innocent term is 'efficient' disposal which qualifies the otherwise required restriction of exports. This could permit exports to cheaper, more efficient sites.

A further paragraph states as a condition for acceptable exports that the exporting country should lack 'necessary facilities, capacity or suitable disposal sites to dispose of the wastes in an environmentally sound

regulating transformer movements within Europe does not bode well for an essentially similar framework on a global scale, where the crucial lack of definition of waste life-cycles and other indeterminacies are far greater.

Waste trading has inherent features which require it to be differentiated from existing norms of international trading in goods and commodities. These features combine to produce what is potentially a very different view of the regulatory options, costs and benefits. The main assumption of the dominant approach (which allows international waste trading, whilst attempting to ensure 'due care') is that existing standards of good practice are fit for all time and that loop-holes in international regulations can be closed by tighter standardisation of hazardous waste definition. My central argument has been that standardisation to the detailed level necessary is illusory, and that international trade is inherently less controllable, hence more costly, than is accepted.

This article has introduced two central concepts for an analysis and evaluation of different regulatory options. First, that hazardous waste life-cycles are not merely uncertain, they are indeterminate and defined not by physical mechanisms, but by social and economic actors. Second, practical working definitions of hazardous waste reflect the perceptions and situations of different actors in the life-cycle, and even formal national definitions embody local institutional assumptions. The attempt to close loop-holes and tighten technical definitions is illusory, because it would imply institutional unification amongst the pool of trading nations. Even in the EEC this is far away; until recently the presumption was that a single European waste market will exist after 1992, though a debate has now emerged. According to my analysis, the difficulties in principle of a standardised European system, necessary for a controllable single market, have not yet been fully appreciated.

The structural features of hazardous wastes movements also indicate the practical difficulties of implementing a genuine 'cradle-to-grave', prior-informed consent, documentary form of regulation within a free trade system composed of different sovereign regulatory cultures. Wastes can change definition whilst passing from one actor to another, even within the regulatory system; in many cases documentation cannot trace a coherent lineage back to the original producer, so that responsibility for any unacceptable practice cannot be clearly allocated and penalised. Attempts to establish legal liability rules even for very simple models of the waste life-cycle have been dauntingly complex:

one legal analysis produced nine different options for a simple, direct two-party producer-disposer relationship.³⁸

One fundamental objective of the EEC system is to inform parties what a load will contain and when it will arrive. In addition to allowing the option of refusal, its importance lies in allowing inspection at the dockside. However, the difficulties in practice are the need for scarce technical staff to wait an indefinite time for boats to unload, and diversion to other ports following change in weather conditions. This means the requirement of a predesignated route of shipment may not always be feasible, and it leaves unscrupulous shippers free to use ports which they know to be less strict, or to divert to such ports on spurious grounds of weather or engine trouble.

Such informal enterprise is often practised without illegal intent, aimed at achieving more 'efficient' shipment by avoiding tiresome interactions with regulators. Some of these manoeuvres may be entirely innocuous. However the overall effect of this extensive underdetermination of real waste life-cycles is to corrode both the authority and the comprehensive nature of regulations, and confidence in them. This, in turn, undermines the essential general commitment to self-regulation in the system, leading to a downward pressure on the quality of practice in the field, despite the fact that regulation ought to be pressing in the opposite direction. This dynamic implies a need to reduce the scope of self-regulation in the field. The alternative is structural, institutional options for intervention in waste life-cycles, which would improve control and exert real pressure for waste reduction.

Focusing regulatory effort on the further harmonisation of technical definitions and elaborating notification schemes therefore distracts from the need to structure hazardous waste life-cycles more institutionally, so that they can be better defined. In order to achieve this the vast and shifting population of middle-men of varying responsibility, stability and competence needs to be reduced to a more manageable number of accountable companies with known track-records. This would require the introduction of formal licensing of waste brokers and transporters by industrial countries. A further measure would be to require licensing of all waste producers, so that such production had to be justified and data on waste sources could be developed. In addition, the principle that export be allowed only to facilities which meet clearly specified, home country standards should be unambiguously established. This in

³⁸ J C Bongaerts, 'Transfrontier movements of hazardous wastes', Wissenschaftszentrum, Berlin, 1988.

turn could require that particular wastes be legally directed to particular kinds of treatment and disposal as a logical prerequisite of specifying the standards of the treatment and disposal facility, and as a fulfilment of the otherwise empty Convention principle of 'environmentally sound management'.

These institutional measures would order, but not destroy, the arena of free commercial agents operating within hazardous waste life-cycles. They place attention further 'upstream'. Stricter institutional responses would aim to collapse the indeterminacies in waste life-cycles altogether, by giving a single public organisation responsibility for the practical management of wastes from 'cradle-to-grave', over a defined area. The waste producer would then be obliged to hand over his waste streams, at a price, to the public authority, or public-private consortium. Such systems operate in Denmark and in some West German regions such as Bavaria and Hesse.³⁹ In effect, they collapse all of the indeterminacies and ill-definition of commercial waste life-cycles into the internal management decisions of a single organisation, albeit one which may have several facilities. Export exemptions from this monopoly system would have to have specific justification.

The argument against such monopoly public service systems is primarily economic. They are said to destroy the efficient recirculation of resources contained in many waste streams by obliterating the collective enterprise and expertise of countless waste brokers, scrap dealers and others. Recycling in some cases, where large volumes of difficult wastes are produced such as pickling acids, has not attracted commercial exploitation even though public investment in their recycling might be worthwhile on environmental grounds. Thus the argument that greater control of life-cycles would stifle the maximisation of recycling opportunities ignores the pertinent question of whether free enterprise maximises recycling anyway. All of these institutional options focus on containing the problems where they arise, preempting the accumulation of uncertainty, ill-definition and unmanageability.

One of the most powerful arguments against legitimising the growth of the international waste trade is not only that it reduces the pressure and opportunity for more progressive change at the point of production, but that it also allows industrial society consumers to externalise the costs of the contradictory political 'demands', for ever-greater consumption combined with increased environmental quality. Indeed,

³⁹ See G Davis and J Linnerooth, in B Wynne, *Risk Management and Hazardous Wastes*, Chapter 6.

much of the growth of hazardous waste production in industrial societies is the result of cleaning up emissions hitherto dispersed into the immediate environment in the industrial society. Transforming these 'local' emissions into packaged, humanly transportable and tradeable wastes allows environmental costs to be imposed upon distant societies, who are unable to gain access even to a little of the consumption that generates the wastes. It is difficult to deny Bongaerts' observation that 'In the long run . . . a system is established which legalises a transfer of risks to human health and the environment from the exporting country to the importing country. Instead of reducing the risks of the generation of hazardous wastes, current regulations seem only to re-distribute them geographically.'⁴⁰

A response to this could be that commercial payment is proper compensation for adopting the risks. Whether compensation is adequate, and is received by those who actually suffer the risks, are large questions. However, the crux of this argument is that it suggests double standards. Compensation schemes for residents around waste disposal facilities in industrialised countries have frequently been rejected as attempted bribes.

An outright ban also risks being unenforceable because it is insufficiently rooted in analysis of the countries of origin, their local sources and structures of waste production and commercial handling. An export ban policed at the point of departure from the exporting country would be little better at controlling waste disposal than disposal-site-only regulation as practised (and widely criticised), for example, in Britain. An effective alternative is to adopt institutional measures for greater structure of waste life-cycles 'upstream', at production and handling, before the critical indeterminacies enter into the process. Accountable public utilities or public-private consortia could operate without the twin profit motives of increased waste production and cheap disposal outlets, and could also be responsible for deciding whether and when properly regulated export might be justified.

Although industry would naturally see such measures to structure all waste life-cycles as unacceptably restrictive, they may nevertheless reflect industry's long-term interests. These, more predictable, options may be better than what might occur with the extravagant lurch of public opinion towards an inadequately founded outright ban, which is a possible outcome of the exposure of the limitations of a prenotification-

⁴⁰ J C Bongaerts, 'Transfrontier movements of hazardous wastes'.

tion system and the Basel Convention. The obligation to respect import bans, and the 'notification and prior informed consent' obligations in the Basel Convention may be a step forward if they are conceived as first steps towards a more structured and rational management of hazardous wastes, whether or not they cross frontiers. The key point, however, is that lack of 'upstream' control, even within a single country's system, is the root of the lack of international control. Tackling the latter requires tackling the former with at least some of the measures outlined above.

Regulatory strategies will have to move beyond rhetoric to incorporate a practical expression of the principle that those whose consumption generates the wastes and their hazards have primary responsibility for their proper treatment and disposal. Only this direct practical responsibility is likely to generate the political and technical impetus towards less hazardous waste production. Only this ultimate option can ensure that people, especially those most vulnerable, do not pay the future costs of the embedded scientific hubris, which maintains that so long as disposal practices are legal, and not shown to be harmful by the current state of science, they are without risk or cost.*

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The war on drugs: a new US national security doctrine?

During the twentieth century anticommunism has served effectively as the cornerstone of US national security doctrines. Anticommunism has functioned as an ideology and a secular religion which has legitimised both legal and illegal, moral and immoral acts of foreign policy in the cause of national survival—the protection of democracy and the American way of life. Decades before the enactment of the 1947 National Security Act and associated legislation which legalised the harassment, imprisonment and execution of ‘leftists’, ‘radicals’, ‘communists’ and ‘fellow travellers’, the fear of Bolshevism, anarchism and syndicalism fuelled the witch hunt mentality that has plagued and dehumanised mankind from Biblical times through the Middle Ages to the McCarthy era of the 1950s.

By the 1980s, however, a problem had developed. Anticommunism was losing its ‘fear’ potential. An increasing number of intellectuals, academics, policy-makers and even the general public were questioning the rhetoric in relation to the political reality. Rapprochement with the PRC, the Vietnam War, and *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR were some of the unsettling international events which threatened the old consensus. This scepticism was undermining the largely unimpeded control over foreign policy which the foreign policy managers had exerted until most recently, causing them to talk of ‘the new nationalism’ and ‘the unitary institutional outlet for policy’, euphemisms for presidentialism versus ‘repluralisation’.¹ Vietnam and the ‘Vietnam syndrome’ had been one significant watershed.² Americans had taken seriously the official mythology of democracy and had exercised their rights of public opinion and protest—on the streets, in Canada and underground when necessary—to exert their influence over foreign policy. The result was a growing movement towards the democratisation of foreign policy, and the popular opposition to another Vietnam-style

¹ R J Barnett, *Intervention and Revolution: America's confrontation with insurgent movements around the world*, New York: Meridian, 1968; and B A Rockman, ‘Mobilizing Political Support’, in G C Edwards III and W F Walker (eds), *National Security and the US Constitution: the impact of the political system*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, p 13.

² M T Klare, *Beyond the ‘Vietnam Syndrome’: US interventionism in the 1980s*, Washington DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1981.

intervention expressed in the Liberal slogan, 'Never Again'.³ Conservatives interpreted the 'Vietnam syndrome' as a loss of nerve, and it posed a fundamental problem for national security: credibility. How could the USA remain the gang leader of the Western bloc against the Soviets and the instability they inspired in the Third World if the threat of intervention might no longer be believed?

Between 1980 and 1988 the Reagan administration sought to exorcise this erosion of control and crisis of credibility with carefully orchestrated displays of 'public diplomacy', secrecy, and renewed militarism and intervention (the 1983 invasion of Grenada, the presence of marines in Lebanon, the militarisation of El Salvador and Honduras, the 'covert' war against Nicaragua, the Iran-Contra affair, and numerous military exercises and war games throughout the Western hemisphere and the Third World). The attempt was but a partial success. Ironically an old US ally, General Noriega of Panama, demonstrated the impotence and corruption of the declining North American empire. The USA attempted to direct a potentially new national security doctrine at him: the war on drugs. But the strategy seemed to fail. The aborted overthrow of the Panamanian dictator, now a political embarrassment, a source of internal instability and a threat to the entire Southern Command structure, exposed the crime, corruption and drug involvement of the intelligence and military agents of US foreign policy.

Corruption and secrecy, inherent in these agencies from inception, became more necessary as anticommunism ceased to serve as the automatic legitimating doctrine of the US national security state. There was a desperate need for a new national security doctrine that would be more persuasive than the war on communism, and a strong candidate was the war on drugs. A CBS news poll found in March 1988 that almost 50 per cent of the respondents believed drug trafficking to be the most important foreign policy issue, even over terrorism and arms control.⁴ A September 1988 'Americans Talk Security' opinion survey

³ F C Ravenal, *Never Again: learning from America's foreign policy failures*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1978.

⁴ B M Bagley, 'The new Hundred Years War? US national security and the war on drugs in Latin America', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 30 (1) spring 1988, p 161. A *Washington Post* ABC news poll in May 1988 found that 26 per cent of the respondents ranked drugs as the most important problem facing the USA today versus 8 per cent for the runner-up issues of the economy and budget deficit; C C Lawrence and S Gettinger, 'Experts skeptical of Congress' anti-drug effort', *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 46 (26) 25 June 1988, p 1713. The article also argued that it was unclear whether there had been an actual increase in drug use in the 1980s since statistics were so unreliable, or whether the matter was 'exaggerated for partisan advantage'.

revealed that 44 per cent of the voters ranked international drug trafficking as an extremely serious threat, compared to 18 per cent for the threat of Soviet military strength.⁵ Therefore, the question is whether the drug war can serve as a new national security doctrine.

What is a national security doctrine?

Entering into general usage only after 1947, the concept of 'national security' has no agreed definitions. As the meaning (and practice) of national security expanded with the rise of the national security state, the military-industrial complex and the conservative establishment confused traditional (and relatively narrow) national security interests with 'national security ideology', the self-serving, often unexamined rhetoric and rationales that disguise militarism and discourage democratic scrutiny in the name of national security. As former president Lyndon Johnson once bragged: 'I can arouse a great mass of people with a very simple kind of appeal. I can wrap the flag around this policy, and use patriotism as a club to silence the critics.'⁶

'National security', as defined by defence specialists, first entails defence in its narrowest concept —the protection of a nation's people and territories from physical attack; and second, the more extensive concept of the protection of political and economic interests considered essential by those who exercise political power to the fundamental values and the vitality of the state. In the last three decades, as US policy-makers became increasingly involved in a more interdependent, chaotic and threatening world, the concept became broader still, until foreign and domestic policy almost completely overlapped. Thus 'national' security became 'globalised' security encompassing not only real or alleged external military and defence concerns, but virtually unlimited interests and 'threats' abroad. At home this unrealistically totalitarian concept of national security encouraged elites to view internal dissent as yet another threat to be suppressed, and to cloak ideologically all government actions, even illegal ones, with the US flag. Often more insidious internal threats to the national well-being, such as racism, poverty, inequality and political corruption, were dismissed in preference for bogus or exaggerated external dangers.

This expanded concept and usage of national security supported

⁵ See *Americans Talk Security*, National Survey No 8, 'Public evaluation of Pentagon waste and US foreign aid policies', September 1988, Martilla & Kiley, pp 12, 56.

⁶ Quoted in A A Jordan and W J Taylor, Jr, *American National Security: policy and process*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, p 45.

the rise of the 'national security state' (NSS).⁷ Ironically, the NSS, which is the product of the modern, technological, communications age, has had to rely more heavily upon secrecy precisely because of the communications revolution that has made secrecy more difficult to achieve. Moreover, despite and because of more stringent constitutional restrictions on war-making and intelligence operations, the NSS has created a 'world of overt covert operations'. As a result, a credible national security doctrine is especially essential to justify in moral terms to policy-makers and the public state actions which would be immoral if perpetrated by individuals.⁸

The concept of a 'national security doctrine' (NSD) has various meanings. The US Department of Defense defines a doctrine as the 'fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives'. One critic interprets this to mean that 'doctrine represents the basic precepts that determine how US forces are armed, trained and organised for the conduct of military operations': it forms the middle ground between a nation's broad geopolitical objectives and the basic, day to day principles of war.⁹ Another

⁷ By means of military assistance and training the USA also exported national security state models abroad. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky described these as 'Third World fascist clones, directly controlled by military elites whose ideology combines elements of Nazism with pre-Enlightenment notions of hierarchy and "natural inequality"'. These military elites interpret any challenge to the status quo as communist subversion of the state. Saul Landau traced the historical roots of the US national security state to US expansionism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which aspired to world power after World War I and to the establishment, protection and expansion of a global empire after World War II. This 'reason of state' doctrine (fascist in the fundamental sense of the word) was institutionally protected by the National Security Act of 1947 (then secret) and later decrees which 'placed the governance of critical foreign and defense policies in the hands of new institutions: a national security apparatus run by national security managers'. E S Herman, *The Real Terror Network: terrorism in fact and propaganda*, Boston: South End Press, 1982, p 3; N Chomsky and E S Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, Boston: South End Press, 1979, pp 252-63; and S Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine: national security and US foreign policy*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988, p 4.

⁸ For example, the 'overt-covert' war in Nicaragua has become impossible to hide from powerful news media. Moreover, the 'operation is deliberately overt in order to put maximum pressure on the Sandinistas', but it is also covert to 'avoid the constitutional processes of deliberation' on war-making. The mammoth modern national security state has 'totally transformed the relationship of the citizen and the state', by appropriating to one man and his small clique of advisers the power of war and peace. Under the national security state and the reigning national security doctrine, the President has unprecedented power 'to censor, to conduct surveillance on US citizens, and to circumvent the will of Congress—all in the name of "national security"'. R J Barnett, 'Losing moral ground, the foundations of US foreign policy', *Sojourners* reprint No 492, pp 2-3. See also R O Curry (ed), *Freedom at Risk: secrecy, censorship, and repression in the 1980s*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1988 (an excellent collection of essays on the infringement of constitutional rights via national security).

⁹ US Joint Chiefs of Staff, as quoted by Klare, 'The interventionist impulse: US military doctrine for low-intensity warfare', in M T Klare and P Kornbluh, *Low Intensity Warfare*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1988, p 51.

views NSD as synonymous with the ideology of national security: '... an unwillingness or inability on the part of US policy-makers and party leaders to offer an honest choice to the public—imperialism or republicanism—led to the rise of the doctrine of national security, the unofficial and often 'higher' cause that has guided US policy for the last forty years'. The NSD was the logical conclusion to a chain of events: the 1947 National Security Act, organisation of the national security state and its institutional apparatus, empowerment of national security managers, and the creation of the doctrine of national security as the 'national security myth'.¹⁰

When the prevailing national security doctrine is credible it deflects dissent as a direct threat to the state itself and the way of life of its citizens. Doctrine functions like religious dogma, subject to a higher morality whereby the end justifies the means; criticism becomes tantamount to heresy. The Reagan doctrine attempted to employ this mechanism to legitimise US intervention and hegemony in Central America: 'The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put at jeopardy.'¹¹

National security doctrines: all for one and one for all

Since the 1970s the master doctrine of anticommunism has been combined with various subsidiary NSDs which identify immediate dangers or specific enemies: Third World revolutions, resource and energy wars and international terrorism. In 1981 the Brown doctrine of former secretary of defence, Harold Brown, warned of counter-insurgency in a turbulent and revolution-prone Third World, stating that military strength may become the 'only recourse' of the USA 'in dealing with the basic causes of disorder in this tumultuous world'. The Carter doctrine forecast 'energy wars' to achieve US energy security. Before a joint session of Congress President Carter declared that any attempt by an outside force 'to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States'. The Haig doctrine propounded by former secretary of state, Alexander

¹⁰ S Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine*, pp xiii, 2-4.

¹¹ S Landau, *The Dangerous Doctrine*, p 142, quoting President Reagan's speech to a joint session of Congress, 27 April 1983. While this was the origin of the Reagan doctrine, it was more fully expressed in the President's 1985 State of the Union address which promised to aid anti-communist 'freedom fighters' on 'every continent'; M T Klare, *Low Intensity Warfare*, p 63.

Haig, focused on the struggle for scarce resources in the Third World and asserted that 'resource wars' could threaten the vital national security of the USA by denying access to strategic minerals.¹²

In the 1980s the Reagan doctrine, which pledged support (short of US combat forces) to anti-Soviet Third World 'freedom fighters' and 'friendly' anti-communist authoritarians, became preoccupied with Central America, particularly El Salvador and Nicaragua. In order to implement this political objective, a new strategic military doctrine—like the earlier military doctrines of containment, rollback, massive retaliation, flexible response and counterinsurgency—was formulated, known as the doctrine of low intensity conflict (LIC). In 1985 the Pentagon defined low intensity conflict as 'a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives' which may use protracted struggle, terrorism and insurgency. Despite its name, LIC actually represents total and interventionary war, wherein victory involves winning 'three battles—in the field, in the media, and in Washington within the administration'.¹³

Recently, the war on drugs is emerging as a powerful new political doctrine under the anti-communist ideology, the strategy of LIC and the reassertion of covert action. Beginning with heroin, US intelligence agents were instrumental in the establishment of the 'Golden Triangle' supply system in Southeast Asia and the Marseilles 'French Connection', ostensibly in the interests of national security. Similarly the scandals of the Australian bank, Nugan Hand Ltd, co-founded by a former CIA operative and steeped in a trail of drugs and money laundering,

¹² M T Klare, *Beyond the 'Vietnam Syndrome'*, pp 16, 30, 50.

¹³ M T Klare and P Kornbluh, *Low Intensity Warfare*, pp 53, 55–56; S Miles, 'The real war: low-intensity conflict in Central America', *NACLA Report on the Americas* 20 (2) April/May 1986, pp 17–48, and p 23 quote from Lewis Tambs, Reagan's Ambassador to Costa Rica; H Sklar, 'Lick low intensity conflict doublespeak', *Zeta Magazine* 2 (3) March 1989, pp 42–51; S C Sarkesian, 'Low-intensity conflict: concepts, principles, and policy guidelines', *Air University Review* 26 (2) 1985, pp 2–11. The term LIC, based on a spectrum of conflict from high to low, assumes perpetual war; that Soviet low-level conflict will be the immediate threat; and that the Third World, not Europe, is the real battlefield. Specific missions are: counter-insurgency to assist friendly governments resist insurgency; 'proinsurgency' to support anti-communist insurgencies in the Third World; peacetime contingency operations; terrorism counteraction; antidrug operations using military resources; and peacekeeping operations. The LIC doctrine has set off a heated debate within the military establishment between proponents who argue that it is classical counter-insurgency doctrine used in Vietnam and those who describe it as a fundamentally new strategy based on the lessons learned, and opponents who support conventional and/or nuclear deterrence strategy. Similarly, radical critics dispute whether LIC is a new, more dangerous doctrine or propaganda—'LICSPINAK' for total war and overt or covert intervention. Sklar argues that "'Low Intensity Conflict' is an effort to relegitimate and modernise US elites' capacity to impose their will by violent means', by sanitising terms and pretending to renounce intervention by US troops (p 48).

prefigured the larger web of the Iran–Contra scandals.¹⁴ The intricate plots and subplots cannot all be examined, but it seems worth arguing first that US intelligence services have long had an intimate relationship with the drug underworld, and second, that this intimacy could facilitate the manipulation of the war against drugs in the interests of the national security state.

The drug war as national security doctrine

The geographic, economic and social dimensions of the drug trade are enormous and growing, but the statistics which document this meteoric rise are difficult to acquire, vary widely, and are often suspect. One source, based on 1988 Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) figures, estimates 6 million habitual cocaine users and half a million heroin users in the USA. It is believed that the wholesale value of all illegal drugs in the USA may be \$25 billion, and the retail value \$150 billion. Worldwide drug traffic may account for \$300 billion, half of which is thought to enter and remain in the USA.¹⁵ Major country suppliers are in Latin America. In the absence of reliable repatriation studies, generally only 10 per cent of drug profits are thought to accrue to source or transit countries. Colombia, the principal cocaine refiner (an estimated 75 per cent), may have received \$1–2 billion in foreign exchange from drug profits (3 per cent of Colombia's GNP) in 1987. While no one really knows how much the Medellín cartel earns, the value of cocaine and marijuana exports probably exceeds \$4 billion annually, of which less than half may remain in the country.¹⁶

In relation to the enormous profits, the US drug enforcement budget remains woefully inadequate and there is much disagreement over how

¹⁴ J Kwitny, *The Crimes of Patriots: a true tale of dope, dirty money, and the CIA*, New York: Touchstone, 1987, p 23, see special issue, 'The CIA and drugs', *Covert Action Information Bulletin* 28, summer 1987, pp 1–68; P Lernoux, *In Banks We Trust*, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984, pp 63–168; and H Kruger, *The Great Heroin Coup: drugs, intelligence, and international fascism*, Boston: South End Press, 1980.

¹⁵ B M Bagley, 'The new Hundred Years War?'. Estimates vary widely; for example another source cites that: the international drug trade is worth approximately \$47 billion per annum; there are an estimated 1.2 million addicts of illegal drugs in the USA, and US spending on drug law enforcement increased from \$800 million in fiscal 1981 to \$2.5 billion in fiscal 1988. Foreign Policy Association, *A Citizen's Guide to US Foreign Policy: election '88*, New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1988, pp 57–58, 60.

¹⁶ R B Craig, 'Illicit Drug Traffic: implications for South America source countries', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 29 (2) summer 1987, p 25; see also J G Tokatljian, 'National security and drugs: their impact on Colombia-US relations', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 30 (1) spring 1988, pp 146–159; B M Bagley, 'The new Hundred Years War?', *Journal of Interamerican Studies*, pp 163–7.

to distribute the monies. The 1988 Omnibus Drug Bill authorised over \$2 billion in new spending for anti-drug activities, but because of legislated spending limits, only \$500 million was appropriated in fiscal 1989.¹⁷ Of this, \$101 million was authorised for international narcotics control for fiscal 1989, providing \$5.5 million for defence department drug control training and weapons assistance.¹⁸ Members of Congress have been frustrated with the Reagan administration's record in the drug war. Two charges are common from legislative critics on both the left and the right: preoccupation with communists, not drugs; and talk about drugs, but little action.¹⁹

In the light of the problem, how does the threat of international narcotics relate to US national security and its new national security doctrine? The answer lies in the pronouncements and the actions of policy-makers since the drug war heated up between 1986 and 1988. On

¹⁷ The Omnibus Drug Bill or 1988 Anti-Drug Bill, PL 100 690 (HR 5210), signed into law by President Reagan on 18 November 1988, established in the executive office of the president the new Office of National Drug Control Policy headed by a cabinet-level director to coordinate national drug control efforts; he could advise the National Security Council (NSC) and attend NSC meetings at the president's direction. President Bush appointed William Bennett as the first so-called 'drug czar'. The bill divided resources equally between drug-supply (interdiction and control) and demand-reduction programmes (treatment, prevention and education). It also introduced more stringent law-enforcement measures, such as the death penalty for major drug traffickers, international banking and money-laundering restrictions, and regulation of the export of chemicals used in the manufacture of controlled substances. See 'Major provisions of the 1988 Anti-Drug Bill', *Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report* 46 (44) 29 October 1988, pp 3146-51.

¹⁸ The Bill 'waives, for purposes of the anti-narcotics program, a controversial 1975 law that bars US aid to foreign police agencies. However, the waiver is allowed only for countries that have democratic governments and for police agencies that do not engage in a "consistent pattern of gross violations" of human rights'; it also earmarks \$2 million for defence department anti-narcotics training of foreign police forces and \$3.5 million in military assistance, see '1988 Anti-Drug Bill', *Congressional Quarterly*, *ibid.*, p 3147. The Bush administration proposed \$5.5 billion in fiscal 1990 outlays for the anti-drug programme, a 21 per cent increase over comparable fiscal 1989 programmes; total outlays proposed specifically for anti-drug enforcement are \$3.9 billion, a 17 per cent increase over fiscal 1989; 'Budget', *Congressional Quarterly* 27 (6) 11 February 1989, p 252. For further background see US General Accounting Office 'Drug control: issues surrounding increased use of the military in drug interdiction', April 1988, p 20; US Department of State, 'International narcotics control strategy report', March 1988, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, p 20; US Congress House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 'Role of the US military in narcotics control overseas', ninety-ninth congress, second session, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1986; and D C Morrison, 'The Pentagon's Drug Wars', *National Journal* 18, 6 September 1986, pp 2104-9.

¹⁹ Senator John Kerry (Democrat—Massachusetts), chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Communications, said: 'despite all of the talk about a war on drugs, there has not been a real war. Drugs have not been the priority that public officials said they were'; and Congressman Charles B Rangel (Democrat—New York), chairman of the House Narcotics Committee, complained that administration officials 'don't want to talk about drugs. They want to talk about arms and communists and terrorists . . . Communists aren't killing our kids, drugs and drug traffickers are'; quoted in M Mills, 'Hill members turn up pressure in war on drugs', *Congressional Quarterly* 46 (15) 9 April 1988, p 944.

the rhetorical level there was a conscious effort by the government to convince the American public and the US Congress of the intimate linkage between drug traffickers and leftist guerrillas.²⁰ The connection was forcefully made after a large cocaine bust in 1984, when the US Ambassador to Colombia, Lewis Tambs, charged that production facilities had been protected by communist insurgents or 'narcoguerrillas'. On the practical level, President Reagan signed a secret directive in April 1986 that identified the illegal traffic as a national security threat and authorised the Department of Defence to engage in numerous anti-drug operations. Other governmental agencies fighting the drug traffic (such as the DEA and the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters) acquired or expanded paramilitary and intelligence capabilities.²¹

The escalation in the war on drugs in 1988 coincided with major foreign policy setbacks in Latin America: 'the collapse of US counter-revolutionary strategy in Central America'; a 'new stage of crisis' in the counter-insurgency against revolutionaries in Colombia and Peru; instability in Panama over the recalcitrant Noriega; and intractable drug control problems in Bolivia, Mexico and Peru.²² Implementation of the drug war doctrine assumed different (often contradictory) dimensions in each case depending upon changing perceptions and priorities, such as which national security interests were really being pursued as opposed to those that were 'ideologised' or manipulated; and the mix of domestic political constraints. The war on drugs also served multiple agendas. For the supporters of LIC, militarised drug operations provided a laboratory to project US power, train local militaries in the new strategic doctrine, transfer military hardware and gather intelligence. Congress saw the doctrine as a way to reassert influence and bipartisanism over foreign policy by being 'hard on drugs'. Both the Reagan and Bush administrations could use the drug war national security doctrine to generate public support behind a resurgent, interventionist US foreign policy in Latin America.

In cases where counter-revolution and counter-insurgency were paramount, such as Colombia, Peru and Honduras, prosecution of the

²⁰ Colonel J D Waghelestein, 'A Latin-American insurgency status report', *Military Review* February 1987, pp 46-7, quoted by M T Klare and P Kornbluh, *Low Intensity Warfare*, p 73, and fn 89 p 229: 'There is an alliance between some drug traffickers and some insurgents'; and 'dollars accrued to the drug dealers find their way into some guerrilla coffers'; and calling for 'the necessary support to counter the guerrilla/narcotics terrorists in this hemisphere'.

²¹ M Rubine, 'The war on drugs', *Zeta Magazine* 2 (1) January 1989, p 94. M T Klare and P Kornbluh, *Low Intensity Warfare*, pp 71-3.

²² Some points here from M Rubine, 'The war on drugs', *Zeta*, p 94.

drug war often remained in the background and was manipulated to win congressional and public support while fighting the 'real' war on communism. In the absence of an immediate leftist threat—as in Panama and Bolivia—the drug war was variously waged with vigour or manipulated to legitimise US military intervention and secret strategic designs. In Panama, drug corruption was initially overlooked for broader so-called geopolitical and strategic concerns, and by 1980 to fight the war on communism in Central America. When the exposure of drug corruption became too explosive, however, Panama was treated as a rogue dictatorship, like Bolivia. Generally, US Conservatives supported Latin military hardliners who opposed leftist forces and/or were amenable to war games and LIC experiments under the guise of the drug war.

Rogue dictators

In two cases of destabilisation against rightist military dictatorships the war on drugs replaced anticommunism as a powerful propaganda and control weapon. Bolivia was relatively easy because there were no other overriding or contradictory security interests; indeed the rogue dictatorship itself was the greatest threat. In Panama the drug war doctrine backfired, compromising other security interests and transforming the unsavoury dictator into another Latin American 'hero' who thumbed his nose at the USA. Ironically, US intimacy with military strongmen in both countries for two decades helped create these rogue drug dictatorships of the 1980s.²³

Bolivia

One of the first cases in which the drug war doctrine was employed in the interests of US foreign policy was in 1980 against the drug mafia government of General Luis García Meza in Bolivia. The general's coup against the elected Bolivian government of Siles Zuazo 'joined together cocaine and National Security State thuggery and terror'.²⁴ The 'drug

²³ The strongmen included Omar Torrijos in Panama and Bolivia's Hugo Banzer. In 1972 the brother of then Panamanian ruler General Omar Torrijos was indicted in New York for smuggling heroin, but was saved from arrest because of national security interests; J Kwitny, 'An inquiry money, drugs and the contras', *The Nation* 245 (5) 29 August 1987, pp 145, 162-6. In Bolivia from 1971-78 the government of General Hugo Banzer became involved with notorious drug lords in Santa Cruz Department, M Linklater, I Hilton and N Ascherson, *The Nazi Legacy, Klaus Barbie and the International Fascist Connection*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1984, pp 266-84.

²⁴ E S Herman, *The Real Terror Network*, p 80.

colonels' and their paramilitary forces, many former Nazis (such as Klaus Barbie), or neo-fascists, were assisted by the 'security forces' of Argentina's arch-conservative generals.²⁵ Ultimately the drug-linked regime became a liability for the Reagan administration which worked to destabilise it by overt and covert pressures (as it later would with Panama's Noriega). Going public, the USA withdrew its ambassador from Bolivia. Even with a relatively vulnerable country such as Bolivia the process took over a year.²⁶

In 1986 the US military forces used Operation Blast Furnace to wipe out the coca growing operations and cocaine paste production laboratories.²⁷ Although drug activity ceased briefly, there were no major busts and soon trafficking operations were bigger than ever, but anti-American feeling and opposition to the civilian democratic government of President Siles Zuazo was stronger than ever.²⁸ The venture had been expensive and counter-productive as a drug operation, but perhaps more successful as a projection of US military power in the region and influence over the sometimes intransigent policies of the civilian Siles. It was the 'Leopards' (a 300-man elite, paramilitary, anti-narcotics force organised and funded by the USA, formally known as the Mobile Rural Patrol Units, UMOPAR) that kidnapped President Siles Zuazo in an aborted July 1984 coup.²⁹ Although US Ambassador Edwin Corr received credit for discouraging the ill-fated attempt, what could have encouraged the mistaken idea in the first place? As one analyst observed, a 'strategic military rationale to deal with the drug problem

²⁵ For the notorious internationalist fascist connection between drugs and right-wing dictators in Bolivia and Latin America see Linklater et al, *The Nazi Legacy*, especially pp 215-302. P Lernoux, *Cry of the People*, New York: Doubleday, 1980, pp 155-310; K Hermann, 'Klaus Barbie's Bolivian coup', *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (25) winter 1986, pp 15-20; and R T Naylor, *Hot Money and the Politics of Debt*, New York: The Linden Press/Simon Schuster, 1987, pp 165-85.

²⁶ J Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins: political struggle in Bolivia, 1952-1982*, London: Verso, 1984, pp 292-344; E A Nadelmann, 'The DEA in Latin America: dealing with institutionalized corruption', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 29 (4) winter 1987/88, p 16.

²⁷ This was the largest scale Pentagon participation in anti-drug operations to date and was the model for future drug programmes in the region. Until 1982 the war on drugs was largely rhetorical since the US military was prevented by law from participation, but in 1982 the law was amended to allow Pentagon assistance and an April 1986 presidential directive sanctioned direct military and intelligence participation; M T Klare and P Kornbluh, *Low-Intensity Warfare*, pp 72-3; J A Kuwell, 'Going to the source', and 'Under the flag of law enforcement', in *NACLA Report on the Americas* 22 (6) March 1989, especially pp 19, 26. Also see my fn 28 for background sources.

²⁸ P Lernoux, 'The US in Bolivia, playing golf while drugs flow', *The Nation* 248 (6) 13 February 1989, pp 188-92; and J McCoy, 'Cocaine business booms in Bolivia and Peru despite US eradication efforts', *Latinamerica Press* 29 (20) 10 September 1987, pp 5-6.

²⁹ R T Naylor, *Hot Money*, pp 173-74.

response to general lawlessness in the Third World, 'to curb "terrorists", outlaws and drug-pushers'.⁶³

Extensive US-Peruvian military exercises, LIC operations such as the Operation Condor series, have been justified by being classed as anti-narcotics control programmes, but the primary agenda has been counter-insurgency against the Maoist Shining Path guerrillas. In the highly publicised Operation Condor IV, the Peruvian air force dropped 500 pound bombs on drug landing strips in the jungle. And Operation Condor VI in July 1987 involved a stepped up US role (DEA agents and US contract pilots) which clearly demonstrated how closely drug control efforts had become linked with counter-insurgency. The assault was ostensibly on the drug trafficking centre of Tocache, which was also a town controlled at the time by Sendero guerrillas. The drug enforcement results of the operation were modest and the State Department admitted that trafficking 'continued relatively unimpeded'. However, Sendero was temporarily routed from the town in a counter-insurgency operation using US funds, equipment and personnel.⁶⁴ Although the Shining Path provided the peasants with a shield to protect them from the eradication effort and abuse by drug cartel middlemen, the main threat from the perspective of US national security managers was described as strategic.⁶⁵ The war may appear to be a drug war, but in reality it is primarily an anticommunist counter-insurgency action legitimised by the drug war doctrine. The recent controversy over the use of the herbicide Tebuthiuron, or 'spike', to eradicate coca fields raises not only serious ecological questions, but also the question of whether the programme is a disguised attempt to dry up guerrilla support. In treated areas, spike will destroy the low-lying rainforest that provides both cover and food for the guerrillas.⁶⁶

⁶³ M T Klare, 'Policing the Third World: a blueprint for endless interventions', *The Nation* 247 (3) 30 July/6 August 1988, p 95. See also M T Klare and P Kornbluh, *Low Intensity Warfare*, 'Low-intensity conflict: a debate', which includes two articles: A Nairn, 'Low-intensity conflict one hit, two misses', pp 4-7, and P Kornbluh and J Hackett, 'Low-intensity conflict, is it live or is it memorex?', pp 8-11, in *NACLA Report on the Americas* 20 (3) June 1986, pp 4-11; and see my fn 22.

⁶⁴ Kawell, 'Going to the source', p 17, and R Gonzalez, 'Coca's Shining Path', pp 22-4, *NACLA*.

⁶⁵ Collett, 'Myth of the "Narco-Guerrillas"', *Nation*, p 134. According to FBI records the DEA used the CIA personnel 'to "help us prepare a better product"', and the 'DEA produces both strategic and tactical/operational intelligence. Of the total strategic product approximately 25 per cent is provided by the CIA'. The DEA also provided agents to Colonel North's operations, 'CIA and drugs', *Covert Action*, pp 26-7.

⁶⁶ Similar charges have been raised in Guatemala where the spraying of chemicals, ostensibly to eradicate marijuana and poppies, is seen by some analysts as 'a counter-insurgency tool: destroying corn it suspects is being fed to guerrillas and defoliating rebel-occupied forests'. Critics argue that drug traffic is minor in Guatemala (producing only 2 per cent of marijuana world-wide) and that DEA activity is completely unrelated to drug activity. 'Environmentalists challenge chemical use', *Washington Report on the Hemisphere* 8 (14) 13 April 1988, p 5.

The Peruvian army's occupation of the Upper Huallagua Valley proved successful as an antiterrorist campaign, but was generally a failure as an antidrug operation. Not only was the army 'narco-corrupted', but it replaced the role of the Sendero guerrillas as the friend and protector of the coca farmers in dealing with the traffickers and the government narcotics control forces (UMOPAR). The army did exactly what the guerrillas had done, forming 'a loose confederation, an uncomfortable marriage of convenience' between the narco-trafficker and the coca farmer.⁶⁷ In short, Peruvian authorities, motivated by the traditional anticommunist national security doctrine of US advisers, defined the real enemy as the Marxist guerrilla insurgents, not the drug traffickers, and merely employed the drug war doctrine as a rationale for extensive LIC counter-insurgency operations.

Conclusions

Although the 'war on drugs' has apparently failed to serve as an effective legitimising principle for US intervention and destabilisation of the Noriega regime, it is premature to suggest that antidrug campaigns cannot become a future rallying point and propaganda instrument to draw US public opinion into line with the foreign policies of the national security state. Although clearly not yet a new national security doctrine in its own right, the drug war strategy has variously assisted or competed with the dominant anticommunist national security doctrine. If seen as a new national security doctrine, however, various problems arise.

First, the war on drugs has been most effective as a principle of public legitimation within the USA. The average US citizen, whether he has accepted the official ideological linkage of drugs with terrorism as a global communist conspiracy or as a valid national security threat in its own right, is mobilised against international drug trafficking. The frustration of the public over US impotence before the Medellin cartel or a drug tainted Noriega is akin to hatred of Qaddafi's Libyan or Khomeini's Iranian terrorism. The 'evil empire of drugs' has the potential to evoke that fear of the enemy so basic and powerful in the doctrine of anticommunism. The danger therefore is that one more generation of US foreign policy will be rooted in hatred of a mythical enemy, in conspiracy not democracy, and in ideological doctrines of national security.

⁶⁷ R B Craig, 'Illicit drug traffic', pp 16-18, quote on p 17.

Second, the drug war doctrine should not obscure the central dilemma of twentieth century US foreign policy. Washington remains caught in the reformulation of an old catch-22, one expression of which was Kennedy's dilemma of having to choose between democracy and counter-revolution. 'There are three possibilities in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we really can't renounce the second until we are sure we can avoid the third.'⁶⁸ The choice today is between narcocracy and counter-revolution, and the belief that the pursuit of one at the expense of the other can succeed reformulates a classic fallacy. Fascism was once believed to be a bulwark protecting against the spread of communism, but it proved to be its very cause. One critic observed that the 'coke and communism conspiracy' is not the point: 'Instead, it is the *modus operandi* of the two camps, their *tactics* which render cocaine *capos* and guerrillas kindred spirits. Both are terrorists because they use violent strategies and tactics.'⁶⁹ This caveat is especially appropriate for US national security managers, lest they be known by their tactics as well.⁷⁰

The allure of political manipulation in the drug war poses a third problem. As a new national security doctrine let loose in Latin America, the drug war is potentially as dangerous as anticommunism. Intervention, even if 'legitimised' by the drug war national security doctrine—no matter how convincing or real the drug crisis may be—still provokes the wrath of nationalism. The lesson of Panama, said one political observer, is that although 'electoral fraud, murder and drug trafficking are crimes in Panama as elsewhere, and most Panamanians believe Manuel Noriega is guilty of all of them', the greater crime in Panama is collaboration with the USA. 'Even if the US government had deposed Noriega, its policy would have failed, discrediting the conservative opposition it sought to bring back to power and further fanning the flames of Panamanian nationalism.'⁷¹

It will be interesting to observe whether these lessons have been

⁶⁸ A M Schlesinger Jr, *A Thousand Days*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965, p 769.

⁶⁹ R B Craig, 'Illicit Drug Traffic', p 30.

⁷⁰ Narco-imperialism has not been shy to employ a 'guns for dope' relationship in the contra affair, the very charges levelled against narco-guerrillas. The confusion of the operations of the CIA, the DEA and the National Security Agency (NSA) is a threat to future US policy. A primary source of evidence of high-level drug corruption has been telephone, electronic and satellite intercepts by the CIA and NSA. This highly classified information has constituted both a curse and a 'blessing'. It is not usable in public and provides a secret 'Sword of Damocles' to threaten other leaders and governments. F A Nadelmann, 'The DEA in Latin America', pp 17-18.

⁷¹ 'Of Puppets and Heroes', *NACLA*.

learned by the managers of the national security state. The 'war on drugs' has potentially dangerous implications as a national security doctrine in Honduras, where many similarities to the Panamanian campaign exist, and in Colombia and Peru where the militarised battle against 'narco-guerrillas' has mobilised and radicalised dispossessed peoples into broad, populist, anti-US movements. Joint anti-drug enforcement programmes have been a convenient subterfuge for renewed hegemony and intervention; the sovereignties of Bolivia and Peru have already suffered from such exercises. If the drug war doctrine, like earlier US national security doctrines, serves to create and cultivate fascist military elites as North American puppets, then little will have changed.

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EA9

NURUDDIN FARAH

A combining of gifts: an interview

Nuruddin Farah is a Somali writer.

Born in 1945 in Baidoa, in what was then Italian Somaliland, he went to school in Kallafo in the Ethiopian-ruled Ogaden, and in Mogadishu—since 1960 the capital of the independent Somali Democratic Republic. He worked briefly in the Somali Ministry of Education before studying Philosophy and Literature in 1966–69 at the Punjab University of Chandigarh in India. After returning to Mogadishu to teach, he left Somalia in 1974 for Britain, where he studied Theatre at the universities of London and Essex, and was attached to the Royal Court Theatre, London. From 1976 to 1979 he lived in Rome, and has since taken up residence in a succession of African countries, including Nigeria, Gambia and, most recently, Sudan. He has also taught at the universities of Mogadishu, Jos, Bayreuth and Minnesota and the State University of New York.

Nuruddin Farah's novels include *Why Dead So Soon?* (1966)—a novella serialised in Somali News; *From a Crooked Rib* (1970); *A Naked Needle* (1976); a trilogy entitled '*Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship*', consisting of *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), *Sardines* (1981) and *Close Sesame* (1983); and *Maps* (1986). He has also written numerous short stories and plays—including *The Offering* (1976) and *Yussuf and His Brothers* (1982). He writes in English (he is fluent in five languages) and won the English-speaking Union Literary Award in 1980, for *Sweet and Sour Milk*. His novels have been translated into nine languages.

Maya Jaggi interviewed Nuruddin Farah in London in January 1989.

The writer and the oral tradition: early influences

Maya Jaggi: You wrote in '*Why I write*'* of some of the early influences on your work: your mother is a Somali poet in the oral tradition, but you have said that you were conscious of a gulf existing between yourself and your parents before you were nine; a gulf 'wide as the distance separating the oral and written traditions'. Could you explain what this gulf was between the two traditions, and what it means to become a writer from an oral culture?

Nuruddin Farah: The gulf that exists between me and my parents has been widening for the best part of thirty years. When I first left home at the age of fifteen or sixteen to go to school in upper Ethiopia, I was very enthusiastic. When I came back, about sharing my new experiences with my parents and pe-mates. But the more I travelled away from my home base, my culture base, the more I discovered when I returned, that the experiences were either far too

*Nuruddin Farah's 'Why I write' appeared in *Third World Quarterly* 10(4) October 1988.

mundane for me to explain or far too complicated. I found that the experience of the oral tradition was limited and, in a sense, that my parents and some of my friends who still belong to the oral tradition were deprived of the knowledge and the experiences which I was exposed to on account of my ability to read and write. I couldn't talk to them about the things that excited me. I couldn't talk to them, for example, about the fact that the world was no longer the small town in which I grew up. At that time I was reading Fyodor Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo, I was reading Egyptian writers and Egyptian poetry, and the world was much larger than those in the oral tradition had ever imagined.

MJ: *Yet you have said that your first experiences of literature were alienating: you described how the text-books you were taught from were the English-language ones shared with the British colonies in East Africa, and that they 'belonged in the mind and culture of other people'.*

NF: Yes, and the one thing that I eventually tried to do was to appropriate the knowledge that I received from them. I felt a form of indigestion, because these books were meant for other people and I was not one of these 'other people', neither were Somalis. What I wanted to do was to combine what I received from others with the gifts that I was given by the Somalis, and to unite them in me, in my work and my creativity.

It was also, in any case, expected that somebody, a member of our large family, would continue the tradition of being a poet, as my mother had been. I was not expected to become a poet because I was too tense, too nervous a child. Unlike the European poet or novelist, a poet in Somalia is considered to be a very responsible sort of person, the most level-headed, who—in addition to continuing the tradition of poetry—has a social function as the mouthpiece of the clan, and I was not expected to be that. The more I read in other people's literatures and cultures the more I came to see myself no longer as a member of a clan, but as a member of a larger universe.

MJ: *And was writing, for you, something that you wanted to do partly because you weren't expected to become a poet, to confound people's expectations?*

NF: In retrospect I don't think so. I think it was simply a challenge to myself. I wanted to do something that other people had never done, and the one thing I could do in a country where there were no writers was to write. (For a long while I had wanted to become a football player, but I hurt my back and therefore never became a professional.) Writing also gave me the *raison d'être* to be alone for a great deal of the time, something that I enjoy, to read, which I also enjoy immensely, and to learn a great deal about other people and other cultures. I also learned, through knowledge of other people's cultures, about my own culture.

MJ: *Have you been aware of incorporating elements of the age-old Somali oral tradition—such as its poetry—in your own writing? Is that something you have brought with you?*

NF: Yes. It's something which I have brought with me and of which I am conscious, as I am also conscious of other influences, and of other important cultural forces that Somalis always recognise in my novels: they know who the characters are and they see that the books are very well-informed about Somalia, that they are typically Somali. Yet other people who don't know Somali culture read the books as though they touch on universal experience, of which I am glad.

MJ: *Were you influenced by any other African writers?*

NF: They weren't actually an influence as such, because by the time I came to Chinua Achebe, who was the first African novelist I read, I had finished *From a Crooked Rib*. Someone introduced me to Ruth Praver Jhabvala, the novelist who writes on India, who lent me a novel by Achebe, either in late 1968 or early 1969. That was the first I had ever heard of an African novelist. The first time that I read other African novelists was on my return to Somalia in 1969-70, when I first read Soyinka's *The Interpreters* which I thought extremely highly of, and other writers. I had, in a sense, the advantage of having an older generation of African writers before me, but also the disadvantage of belonging to Somalia which had, for political and cultural reasons, never looked to Africa for guidance, but to elsewhere, such as India. My coming to African writing was therefore belated, but I must say that not a great deal interests me. The writer whose total oeuvre has impressed me has always been Achebe.

Language and censorship

MJ: *You were the first Somali to write a novel (From a Crooked Rib) as well as the first person to write a novel in Somali. Did the desire to become a spokesman to the world about Somalia influence your choice of the language in which to write? You had what you called a brief 'love affair' with the Somali language; after 1972, when it gained an official orthography, you wrote in Somali for a while. Can you explain why you decided to return to English as the medium of your writing?*

NF: I didn't actually decide, it was decided for me by the censorship of my novel in Somalia. Much to my regret, I did not fight against the injunction: I was out of the country at the time, and when I returned I discovered that publication of the novel in serialised form had been discontinued. I asked myself then whether it was wiser for me to go back to writing in English, because I had started writing in 1965, and in the period when Somali had no orthography, I had written in English—*From a Crooked Rib*, *A Naked Needle* and a couple of plays—so the love affair came to an end. Love affairs do come to an end eventually, sometimes peacefully, sometimes following some kind of rancour. This one was not very peaceful.

MJ: *Because of the censor?*

NF: Because of the censor and also because of my conscience, and because I wanted to be read not only by Somalis but also by other people. I often ask the question, who are the people in Somalia who read, since reading novels is not easy, but is something that is taught. My feeling is that the very people who read my novels in English are the people who are likely to have read them in Somali. So in terms of a local Somali audience, I am not missing a great deal, because those people read my books anyway. The other thing that I ask myself is whether I am a Somali and only a Somali, or not only a Somali but an African. Do I not want other people on the African continent to share my experiences with me, and to have direct access to my books?

MJ: *Only direct access? Some people would say that you could write in Somali and then let the translator disseminate your work further.*

NF: Well, in my own case and that of Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, we would be translated into English principally because we already have a track record in English. But there are hundreds of writers in Somalia, and in Kenya, who are not translated into English or into any other language. So this is the irony; we would actually, opportunistically, be using the past which Ngūgĩ and I share, in choosing to write in Gikūyū or Somali or anything else. This needs to be emphasised.

MJ: *So do you have any sympathy at all with Ngūgĩ's position on language, his having decisively ceased to write in English and adopted Gikūyū as the sole medium of his writing?*

NF: Well it's a personal choice, but I've recently had the opportunity to teach Ngūgĩ's novels and to re-read *Devil on the Cross*. The spirit of the book, its language and complexity, seem to me to be no different from Ngūgĩ's books written in English. In fact, *Devil on the Cross* owes more to European thought and to Biblical aggressiveness than his other books. Ngūgĩ remains the same person who writes in the same way, probably translates himself into Gikūyū to begin with, and then retranslates into English. The spirit, the person, the energy in Ngūgĩ's writing remain unchanged.

MJ: *Before we leave the language issue, you said, in 'Why I write', that 'the more I read books pertaining to other cultures and other languages, the more I would find Somali inadequate for self-expression'. Could you explain that comment?*

NF: A language, and the vocabulary of a language, is not invented by one person. It's brought into being by a combination of factors involving the will of a community of persons including scholars, academics and ordinary people. Yet, there has been no coordinated effort in Somalia at creating a body of language to express the complexities of present-day life. Somali lacks, for example, adequate words to express technological terms. There hasn't been a policy on the part of the Somali government to enrich Somali by inventing these terminologies. I have lived outside Somalia for many years. I have had the opportunity to learn more languages than most other Somalis and, commuting between three continents—Europe, North America and Africa—have been

presented with the need to express myself about complex matters. I often find myself at a loss whenever I have to say something in Somali about a technical matter—about how a newspaper is produced or how a broken typewriter is repaired. I don't know what word to use if I am talking about the clutch in a car, or the keys of a typewriter, or the dialling tone of a telephone. It is therefore one thing to be in Somalia and to talk about things of local interest in Somali—a language which is obviously sufficient for these local experiences, and is also famed for its poetry. But when you want to live in the twentieth or the twenty-first century, Somali is at present inadequate.

MJ: *What is the status now of your novels in Somalia? Are they freely available?*

NF: They are not freely available; they are usually smuggled into the country.

MJ: *All of them?*

NF: All of them, including my first novel, *From A Crooked Rib*, which used to be available. But they haven't been available for many, many years, and my name is banned, and cannot be mentioned in any form—written or on the radio or elsewhere in public. The exception was at a Somali Studies Congress which was once held in Somalia, where somebody gave a paper on the novels. That was the only mention in print in Somalia that my name can boast of in as many as fifteen years.

MJ: *—The period of your exile?*

NF: Yes, the period of my being away from Somalia.

Somali nationalism and pan-Africanism: nation and clan

MJ: *Despite your having lived outside Somalia for fifteen years, all your books have been set in Greater Somalia.*

NF: Yes and I suppose the reason is that, as it's said, when one grows older one remembers one's childhood better and more clearly than when one was still young. Distance, I think, has enabled me to focus much more clearly on Somalia, and distance has also enabled me to expel all the useless material embedded in my memory, keeping with me only the useful things.

MJ: *Would you consider yourself to be a deeply rooted writer?*

NF: I would consider myself primarily as a Somali writer and then as an African.

MJ: *Deeriye, in Close Sesame, describes himself as 'a Sayyidist' (after the great Somali poet and resistance leader, Sayyid Mohammed Abdulle Hassan), 'a Somali nationalist and a pan-Africanist'. Is that how you would describe yourself?*

NF: I probably would, although I should qualify that my nationalism is based on the rational belief that, in the case of the territories in dispute with Ethiopia and Kenya, the Somali communities in these two countries should either be allowed to join their brethren and sistren in the Somali Republic, or

should be treated with dignity as a minority in the countries in which they are found. By that I mean they should be allowed to use their language, to live without harassment and without fear for their lives; they should not, every half-decade or so, be rounded up at random and massacred, because this is not the way to treat a minority. It doesn't matter where the territory is or what flag flies; what matters is that these people be treated as human beings. If they are treated as such and they are happy where they are, that's fine. But they are not well where they are, and as a humanist I would say that one must do something about this for humanitarian reasons, and the world must be told about it.

I have always believed that the Somalis are the first pan-Africanists, in the sense that they would like the continent to challenge the colonial boundaries, a law laid down by the British, the French, the Portuguese and so on, in contradistinction to the people's wishes. Some might say that the Somalis are trying to cut off chunks of Ethiopian and Kenyan territory and integrate them into the Somali Republic, that they are either 'expansionist', which is a term often used, or 'secessionist'. I think that the Somalis are probably too early for their time in the African context. One possible way of dealing with not only the Somali crisis, but the crises in which so many peoples are caught in different parts of Africa, is for larger federations to be formed of areas in Africa where people are linguistically and ethnically close—federal republics of the same type as Yugoslavia. But we are not fortunate enough in Africa to have wise heads of state who would be willing to relinquish power—tribal, clan power—nor are we yet likely to have uprisings against these dictatorships. Hence our predicament. But I think the time will come when what Nkrumah spoke about will somehow be brought into being by politicians and people alike: African unity and regional unities. We must also remember that in Europe they are now speaking about eliminating all boundaries; they are turning Europe into a market. It might be worthwhile for Ethiopians and Kenyans to consider that if, for example, the Somalis in their countries were able to move freely between Somalia, and Ethiopia and Kenya respectively, as they traditionally did, then the tense situation would be reduced immensely.

MJ: *You mentioned tribal, clan power. While the Somali Republic is unusual among African states in having a unitary culture—one language and religion—the kind of divisive clan politics, of which you have been critical in your work, persists. Is it partly, do you think, because you have lived outside Somalia that you have come to see yourself primarily as a Somali rather than as a member of a clan, and been enabled to think of yourself as a spokesman for the Somali nation as a whole?*

NF: I don't think it's because of my being away from Somalia for such a long time that I have developed my Somaliness. I have always felt Somali, and have always condemned any form of clannish politics. The reason why there is this clannishness in Somali politics is because traditional nomadic hamlets in

Somalia are physically separated by great distances. In that context, Somalis have somehow developed a sense of individualism which could only be rooted by the power of the elders in the clan to which one belonged. Ironically, I too have been living as a nomad in hamlets in different parts of the world and have developed my own individualism. The reason why the clannish politics of the current regime of Somalia doesn't appeal to my political beliefs is that it is very unhealthy, very divisive; it isolates a given clan while supporting another, and by isolating one clan it obviously disseminates the power politics of the other. I therefore do not oppose the definition of families, or clans; what I oppose is the unhealthy nature of this divisiveness.

In Somali we have a proverb that says, in spirit, that the closest to each other are the teeth and the tongue, and even they quarrel. Other people in Africa have also often commented on the clannish politics in Somalia, and the occurrence of massacres; they say 'we thought that if you had a state in which everybody was ethnically one, there would be less tension'. No, of course not. This is not the case because of the current stage of technological and educational development, and because of the critical stage of events. We will massacre each other and then we will have to learn from these massacres. For good or ill, Nigeria has learnt from its civil war; Nigerians are not going to have another civil war, in my opinion—not on the same scale as Biafra. I don't think that Somalis are going to have another massacre like the one we have had recently, because people have learnt from this experience. It is always beneficial to learn from such experiences and to make sure that they are not repeated.

MJ: *You are referring to the massacres in northern Somalia in the summer of 1988, which you spoke out against publicly in London. Reports said that the main target of the government bombing raids on Hargeisa, Burao and Berbera was the Issaq clan in the north, the main support base of the Somali National Movement (SNM). Some people say that the reason why the SNM is not gaining wider support as an opposition movement to the regime is because it is associated with a particular clan rather than with nationalist opposition. Is it still a case, at this stage in Somali politics, of the regime 'calling the nationalist tribalist, and the tribalist nationalist', as you wrote in Close Sesame?*

NF: I see the Somali National Movement as a nationalist movement in its political intentions. I see it as a movement fighting against the dictatorship of Siyad Barre. Whether I agree or disagree with the tactics which they use is completely irrelevant. Personally, I do not see it as belonging to only one clan, and if this is so it is due to malorganisation on the part of the chairman and his committee. I believe that about 85-90 per cent of the Somali people are willing to rid themselves of the Barre regime but they are badly organised, and Barre is such an astute politician that he has been able to divide them by misnaming personalities and organisations: reasons are found to call nationalists tribalists as you have quoted. It is very sad that other dissident

organisations and the SNM have not joined forces. It is also sad, as I said in my talk in London, in June 1988, that the SNM as a movement did not start the uprising in the capital city of Somalia—Mogadishu, and that they depended on the grassroots support of the area from which some of them had come. This was a tactical mistake, in my opinion.

All the same, I condemn Barre's regime, and I would say that the Somali government is responsible for every drop of blood shed in the massacre. Because of the helpless situation in which Somalis have found themselves, many of them will resort—have already resorted—to desperate, almost kamikazi, acts of bravado, by which they think they can achieve change. It is the dictator who has compelled these people to behave in this irrational manner, and therefore I would not hesitate to condemn the regime.

Women and tradition

MJ: *In 1968 while you were in India as a student, you wrote From a Crooked Rib, the story of Ehla, a young nomadic woman from Kallafo, who resents the traditional role she must play as a woman in Somali culture, and questions sexual inequality and subordination. Can you describe the genesis of the novel? In particular, what moved you to write with such sympathy and sensitivity of the sufferings and constraints of a woman's life, to the extent that the publisher to whom you sent the manuscript wrote back asking if you were a woman or a man?*

NF: Well this is something like twenty years ago. Therefore, whatever I say will either be a re-creation of an unremembered incident, or a total fabrication. I had written a novel in 1966 of some 300 pages, and showed the manuscript to a friend of mine in Mogadishu, just before leaving for India, who thought that it contained more than one novel. After a year in India I had finished a second novel called, I think, *To Make a Deal*, which was a parody of Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, in which the main character was a female, not a male; a woman who is indifferent to the rest of the world and who says 'the world doesn't care about me, why should I care about it?' It wasn't a very good novel, but the idea was, I think, basically sound. An American publisher showed some interest and asked me to rewrite it, but I changed my mind and never got round to doing so. It was during that period that I reread my first novel (excluding the novella, *Why Dead So Soon?* which I published in 1966) and found that the first forty pages would give me enough material, and I rewrote those forty pages in a month-and-a-half. That is how *From a Crooked Rib* came into existence.

Ultimately, I am happy that the novel works as a novel. I am also very delighted that I am involved in a just cause, because a woman's cause is a cause that all men and women must be involved in, my belief being that men must also be liberated from themselves and from their own aggression. In areas of the world where a colonial past is distant, or non-existent, such as

Europe and North America, society is now dealing with the details of liberation, of which feminism is a part; it is coming late even to Europe. It just so happens that I wrote the novel in 1968, more or less coinciding with the period when feminism was emerging in many places in Europe and North America, but I can assure you that I had no knowledge of all that was taking place because I didn't come to Europe until 1974.

MJ: *You have also portrayed with sympathy in other of your works, the predicament of urban, educated women—notably Medina and others in Sardines—'liberated' women who are none the less to some extent victims of a still reactionary society. How far, if at all, do you think the loss of African women's traditional rights has been compensated by gains in modern civil rights?*

NF: I think the gains are fewer than the losses. It is sad but true that more women are being turned into prostitutes and semi-prostitutes in the professions which they pursue. Forgive me for using these terms, but this is actually what it comes down to, when, because of male aggression in Africa, a woman must allow herself to be used sexually in order to make progress in a profession, or to sleep with her teacher at university in order to be given a pass mark. This tyrannical situation continues, while in traditional society there was no such thing as this intimidating sexual aggression. This is one of the losses, that whereas women, traditionally, received respect from their male partners on a private basis, through marriage, or even having children together without marriage, nowadays the woman is responsible for her pregnancy while the man is not responsible for anything that occurs to her, and she must allow him to use her.

There have been a few gains in certain areas, of course, but they are not great in the sense that the percentage of women who have reached that level of male equality is very small compared to the majority who remain enslaved to a system which is partly traditional and partly modern. It is no accident, for example, that Ebla is first raped by her future husband, before they get married, in Mogadishu, because traditional restraints on behaviour simply do not exist in urban areas.

MJ: *How would you describe your attitude towards tradition?*

NF: In Africa and other Third World countries as well as in Europe, societies are constantly changing. Fifteen years ago, before feminism, women had a certain place in Europe, a certain job to perform: they were either secretaries or they were in the kitchen. This tradition has been challenged by women; a kind of a revolution is taking place, where doors have been pushed open. In Africa, too, we have a number of good traditions and a number of bad ones. For example, in Somalia, female circumcision is a most barbaric activity. I would say, therefore, that anything that does not accord with our view of human dignity as we live today, anything which endangers people's lives, encroaches on the dignity of women—whether it is traditional or non-traditional—that thing must cease. Society must be turned into a humanitarian

one. My view of tradition is therefore one which has no room for indignities of the human person, be they male or female.

MJ: *Some people might argue that tradition is a cohesive force in society, and therefore must not be challenged.*

NF: This force has already been broken down, and almost all elements of the bourgeoisie in Africa and the Third World have already adopted ways which are oriented towards a modern, comfortable way of existence, but which disregard the large majority of the population. That majority must also be included in this comfortable situation, so that a greater part of humanity can reap the benefits of change. I know, for example, that a large number of Somalis living abroad have ceased circumcising their daughters. A great many of them in Mogadishu have also stopped practising female infibulation, because they are middle-class, bourgeois, educated. What I am saying is that this must be made the rule and not the exception.

MJ: *You make frequent use in your work of a language of images, symbols and metaphors. Did you conceive of Ebla in From a Crooked Rib as also playing an allegorical role as a symbol of the Somali nation? She enters into various polyandric marriages; did you intend these to mirror the nation's oppressive relations with colonial and imperial masters?*

NF: There may have been something of the kind in my mind at the time of writing *Crooked Rib*, but I had clean forgotten about it until I was reminded of it by other Somalis who interpreted Ebla as being the Somali nation. In Somali poetry as well as in Somali folktales, women are traditionally taken to represent the nation, unlike, for example, a country such as the Sudan, which is referred to as male, a 'fatherland' rather than a 'motherland', which I find absurd.

MJ: *So it would be quite a natural assumption for a Somali reading your work to interpret Ebla as depicting the nation?*

NF: Yes.

Islam and identity: challenging the taboos

MJ: *Could we turn to the place of Islam in your work. First, what is the status of your own books in the Muslim world? Have they been translated into Arabic?*

NF: No they have not been, and I have never quite discovered why. One reason—and there may be many reasons—probably has to do with the fact that many Arabs are upset that I, who in their opinion should be writing in Arabic, have chosen to write in a foreign language, English. It may, therefore, simply be a way of saying that we are not interested in you, of showing their indifference. The other reason probably concerns their dislike of some of my writing, but I have never had an official response to the works.

MJ: *You have never hesitated to criticise in your work what you see as illegitimate uses of Islamic principles, whether to justify exploitation or women's*

subordination. Do you apply the same humanitarian criteria concerning human dignity, that you have been mentioning in connection with tradition, to practices which are performed in the name of Islam?

NF: Yes, I would apply the same code of behaviour. The Islam which was practised during the Prophet's time was necessarily very different, in my opinion, from the Islam practised today—different in the sense that the situation has changed, Islam has reached more areas of the world, and come into contact with people who are non-Arab. Islam is now a universal religion which has to accept the tastes and the views of the people—as well as the changes taking place—in these other societies.

In Islam, human dignity is very important. I can assure you that the majority of the dictators who rule in so-called Islamic republics have no sense of Islamic dignity or the dignity of women, and for that reason I criticise them. In some countries (I wouldn't want to mention any) which are thought to be Islamic, the people with whom, owing to class and education, I come into contact are more un-Islamic than any I have ever seen, waking up with a bottle of whisky in their hands. This is hypocrisy, and hypocrisy, from whatever direction it comes, must be condemned. The truth is, people like to live as happily and as comfortably as they can, and it is God who in the end will decide the fate and destiny of these people. Therefore, for some mortal being to determine on a day-to-day basis how to judge or punish this or that person in the name of the Lord is very unIslamic. No one has authorised any of these people to speak pronouncements on everything that moves under the sun, from visits to the moon, to condemnation of a novel by, say, Naguib Mahfouz or Salman Rushdie.

MJ: *You are presumably referring to the novels, Children of Gebelawi (1959) by Naguib Mahfouz, and The Satanic Verses (1988) by Salman Rushdie. How do you react to the controversy currently raging over the portrayal of Islam in certain sections of The Satanic Verses?*

NF: I was very surprised. I have always seen Salman Rushdie as an anti-colonialist, anti-racist novelist, and I have always respected him for that. I see *The Satanic Verses* more as an anti-racist book than as a blasphemous or anti-religious one, and I believe that one can only, in any case, blaspheme against God, not against the Prophet and the saints, who have no divine attributes. Those dream passages concerning Islam are simply a reinterpretation from a novelist's viewpoint of some of the known facts. If people objected to those passages, they should simply have made this absolutely clear, and left it at that. Instead, something terrible and unIslamic has happened.

Traditionally in Islam, you had an emir who was a kind of dictator, who decided who, and how, to punish on behalf of society, but always in collaboration with the community of other Muslims. This is no longer the case. There is no governancy, no emirate, no one Kingdom of Islam. Now Islamic knowledge has been cynically appropriated by a select few scholars and religious divines,

for use as a power base from which to rouse fanatics to do their bidding—burning, looting and even killing. Yet, for a Muslim believer, it is God who decides the destiny of all people; for a mortal to have a whip in his hand and to judge and determine the fate of someone in the name of the Lord is profoundly unIslamic. Since Salman Rushdie is culturally a Muslim, he surely faces the same fate as any other Muslim; that of being dwarfed by Allah. Why don't these people who are displaying their swords simply say, therefore, that God is powerful, He punishes, He will punish, and then let the matter rest in God's hands? This is much more Islamic.

MJ: *Do you feel an affinity with other Muslim writers?*

NF: Yes, with some North African writers, for example, and with Salman Rushdie's work. Being culturally Muslim, these writers and I are hovering over the same Islamic terrain, trying to do similar things in our writing, questioning values, challenging things. For example, the Moroccan novelist, Tahar Ben Jelloun published a novel called *The Sand Child* (1985) (which I hadn't read until recently) in which a girl is born, and her father decides that she is going to be treated as, and brought up as, a boy. At the same time, I published *Maps* in which there is a boy who menstruates and wants to be like a girl, feeling that there is an older woman inside him. It is interesting for us to have been moving in the same direction independently, exploring and questioning sexual identity, which is, of course, taboo in Islam: women are women and men are men. Similarly, *Close Sesame*, which has in it a man with a streak of madness in him, has reminded someone of another novel by Ben Jelloun published in the same year (*Moha le Fou, Moha le Sage*, 1983) about a madman who goes through the streets saying all kinds of mad but wise things. I could find similar parallels with the work of Salman Rushdie or some other Algerian and Moroccan novelists.

MJ: *Is there a reason why madness features in these novels?*

NF: In Islam madness occupies a mystical position. The mad as opposed to the wise. And there's an Arabic proverb, not Islamic, but Arabic, which translates as 'all people who receive wisdom from the mouths of the mad remain sane.' The mad are also a mirror to the sane. You look at yourself in them, and you ask yourself why they have become as they are, and how you have remained untouched. And in Islam, you are supposed to thank God for being spared.

In defiance of dictatorship: from revolution to exile

MJ: *You returned to Somalia from India soon after the coup that brought Siyad Barre to power in 1969. Were you under any pressure to write for or against the revolution at that stage?*

NF: I probably wrote one or two favourable articles in around 1971, but I wasn't actually under any pressure as such; I believed in the things that I was

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Somalia needed a revolution and therefore we all invested our hopes suppose I was also young, and more full of enthusiasm than I am now, of cynicism. But I didn't work for the revolution as such, I was a nan, a teacher. I had little to do with the day-to-day running of politics, started writing in 1971 feeling that there were some good things about olution, not much more, though I wouldn't do it now. It was a very ved period.

So when did the turning-point come in your perception of the regime?

It began, perhaps, in late 1971, when for the first time in the Somali s history, people were executed for their political ideals. And then I o be conscious of what was happening to our own trust in the regime.

And once you had seen what was happening, did you then feel a re-ility to write about it?

Yes, I didn't hesitate. I didn't at first know what form it was going to id then I wrote *A Naked Needle* which I put in the post to my publishers ary 1973. They were ready to publish it, but were worried for my so they withheld publication until I came out of Somalia. It was then t out of the country by a friend. For that reason, *A Naked Needle* was lished until 1976, because I left Somalia in August 1974.

How did your exile actually come about? You didn't leave as an exile?

No, I didn't; I have never accepted myself as an exile. In July 1976 y graduate course in Theatre came to an end, I left Britain for Rome ng to take a plane back to Somalia. When I rang home to ask someone me up from the airport, I was told that it wasn't safe for me to return, unt of *A Naked Needle*.

And you have never been back since?

No.

Why did you say that you have never accepted yourself as an exile?

Because I am not the one who is in exile; it is the leaderships, the s of Africa that are in exile. I may be absent physically, but I am not spiritually nor am I exiled from my own people who, to the best of my dge, have a high respect for the principles by which I stand, and still heir trust in me.

In your trilogy on African dictatorship you recreate the terror and conf of a police state, with its ubiquitous National Security Service, and you e the cunning of the regime in neutralising its opponents. Do you think ur depiction of Somalia under Barre applies widely to Third World and ctatorships? Is it a portrait that you recognise elsewhere?

It is a portrait that has been recognised in Colombia, and many other American countries, in Eastern Europe, and in some African es—though not all. There are also many parallels between *Sweet and ilk* and a film called *Man of Marble* by the Polish director, Andrej I saw the film and thought how similar they were (which someone may

already have pointed out in an article), but then I knew that Eastern European readers would find similarities between their condition and the Somali condition in the 1970s.

MJ: *How do you relate what is currently happening in Somalia to the portrait you painted in the 1970s?*

NF: Little has changed; the canvas is still being painted with blood, the only difference is that now and again, the blood is brighter or duller. It is the same dictatorship, the same ruler; Barre has changed forces from the Soviet Union to America. Reagan has been his friend, and now I suppose Bush will be. But I don't think anything else has changed, though the regime becomes more or less ruthless depending on the current situation.

MJ: *You have said that the overall theme of the trilogy was that of 'truth versus untruth'. Yet the truth you oppose to the narrow, ideological truth of the regime seems to be an open-ended, relativistic, novelist's truth. This is partly a result of your use of indirect narrative, since many of your stories are told through the eyes of someone who is confused or innocent. Do you use this narrative device deliberately to create a kind of ambiguity in truth, and what is truth?*

NF: Yes, I always have. The concept of what is truth and what is not truth has always fascinated me. Being an artist, I spend a great deal of time alone, working away at the typewriter, isolated from the rest of humanity. Not only do I not usually have other Somalis with whom to check facts, but I also know that the interpretation of facts given by different people varies. The reason why it took me so long to release *Sweet and Sour Milk* (although I finished it in 1975, before the publication of *A Naked Needle*) was that I wasn't really sure that I had the truth in the grip of my imagination. I ask myself often enough whether I am insane or whether others are; whether I am the one with the vision or if others possess it; I am not one of those people who lives in the confines of their own conception of truth. But truth in all its contexts is what finally leads you to comprehend the first and most important questions that all human beings ask themselves: 'Who am I?' 'Why am I who I am?' 'What is my place in this world?' and it is in answer to these questions that I have been writing, coming to the same questions from different angles, using different characters.

History in fiction: traitors and scapegoats

MJ: *Your most recently published novel, *Maps*,* is set initially in the Ogaden at the time of the war between Somalia and Ethiopia, and subsequently in Mogadishu where the protagonist, Askar, is debating whether to continue his studies or to take up arms for the Western Somali Liberation Front. Could you describe the origins of the idea for *Maps*?*

NF: The writing of *Maps* probably dates back to the time when the war was

* Nuruddin Farah's *Maps* (1986) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (4) October 1988, pp 1628-31.

on, but I can't really pin down where Askar, or any other character, comes from; they are a reconstruction from other people's memories, not mine, and even then, I don't remember anyone talking to me about anyone resembling Askar, Hilaal or Qorrax. I wrote the first draft of what was to become *Maps* in Nigeria, before rewriting while living in the Gambia, so I can't remember the genesis of the book. It may have come from my early memories of Kallafu, the town in which I grew up, although the book is definitely not autobiographical; there is nothing that I can think of, or that I know about my own life, that is in any way similar to Askar's, or any other character's in the novel. It is also true that I had two things in my mind for many years. One of them was to write a book about the Ogaden—whether it would take the form of a novel or a history—because no one has ever written a history of the Ogaden, a land in which a million-and-a-half people died in the 1977-78 war. The second thing that I have always wanted to do was to write a play or a biography about Sayyid Mohammed Abdulle Hassan, the resistance leader and poet. And I hope to do so one day, before I cease.

MJ: *In Maps, Close Sesame and other books, you cite a number of reference works whose use you acknowledge in your writing of those novels. How much research do you normally do for a novel?*

NF: I do a great deal of research, a lot of which I don't use. Deeriye, the main character in *Close Sesame*, for example, is asthmatic. An asthmatic character served the purposes of the book, because asthma is a symbol of that enclosure, of refusing, in view of old age, and the political situation, to come out and be free. Now I am not asthmatic and I have no way of knowing what an asthmatic feels like. That meant that I had to read about asthma. I also had to read history books about Italian colonial rule in the Horn. The result might be no longer than a sentence in the novel, but it might take you about a week to find the information, then to integrate it into the text, and finally cut it down to the minimum, so that it does not become an obstacle to the reader.

MJ: *A recurring theme in your work seems to be that of loyalty and its converse, betrayal. In Maps, Askar is torn between loyalty to his adoptive mother and loyalty to his motherland, and the novel also involves betrayal on a grand political scale, since Somalia was defeated in the war because of Soviet realignment with post-revolutionary Ethiopia. In Sweet and Sour Milk you describe the regime's system of informers, and in Close Sesame there are parallels between betrayals of friendship and historical betrayals. Does this preoccupation with the theme stem partly from the cultural importance of trust and loyalty in an oral society, and also from an awareness of historical betrayals suffered by the Somali nation—from within and without?*

NF: Yes, both. There is a system of healthy coexistence among members of an oral tradition, who trust one another fully on a word given, in the absence of contract. You believe what someone tells you, and lend and borrow freely; there is total trust. With the advent of the written tradition, which came with

the Arabs, this trust began to erode, and differences began to appear in terms of education and ambition, between cities and rulers. People's ambitions were simple before; you knew that when you grew up and reached the age of fifteen or sixteen, you got married and grazed your parents' cattle, or farmed. That was all there was to it. With the advent of the dictatorship, people discovered that by selling secret information to the National Security Service, they could make money. So trust was the first thing that went out of the window, and everyone began to betray someone else.

Now, in my books, the characters are less important than the story which is being told about them: stories are never told simply about the characters alone, but about a whole nation, which is the more important story. In *Sweet and Sour Milk*, the betrayal is within the family, the point being that if you take the Somali nation as a family, the betrayal is no longer that of colonialism, it is no longer from outside, but from within: in my opinion, the explanation for all the ills of Somalia, as of Africa, need not be sought elsewhere, but must be found within the country and the continent, and the cure must also be found within.

MJ: *But can't many of the ills of Africa genuinely be attributed to the interference of outside powers, which you have always condemned in your books?*

NF: Yes. But if a woman or a man approaches someone, and their interest is not reciprocated, the approaches will eventually cease. We cannot but condemn outside interest, because these outsiders do not have anything new for us, and their interest is generally unhealthy. But then again, we must condemn both our own people and our heads of state for encouraging that interest.

I am not one of those people who always condemn only leadership. There are some other—major—writers who think that if you change the leadership in Kenya or Nigeria or Somalia, you are going to solve all the problems. I don't think so. I think what we need to do is to change the people, too. We cannot simply blame leadership, because we can get rid of them if we want to. And experience has shown that often where leaderships have been replaced in Africa, very little else has changed. There are numerous examples: Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria. What this means is that there is something more basic that needs changing. I think our people are sick, too; they are ill-informed, uneducated, unwilling to learn, prey to bourgeois tastes, they love to have the most fashionable car, the most fashionable clothes, and so on. Until we change this we are not going to get anywhere. I am tired of hearing all these ills placed at the doorstep of the colonial powers. They are surely responsible for sabotaging the structures of African society, but we have been independent for however long now, and we are surely responsible for the things we have done.

The writer's role in politics: the African experience

MJ: *What do you see as the role of the writer in politics?*

NF: I see the role of the writer in politics as I see the role of the writer in

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life, as being the depository of the nation's memory, the trustee to the nation's wishes and the custodian of the people's views; the honest one who doesn't sell his pen. I am against writers getting involved in day-to-day, mundane politics. If a writer wants to become a politician, and is climbing several platforms weekly, he will end up compromising with other political forces. In order to steer away from such compromises, the writer must, in my opinion, be involved in the study of an objective reality, in which he is not a direct participant, so that he can inform others when an act has taken place sometimes, or can alert them before something has happened. If you are a politician, you have your own political interests, and would only divulge those political details exigent to your needs. Who would benefit? Not the nation, but your own political and personal prestige.

Overthrown regimes have never really interested me as such, because the question is, what do you replace them with? I am not, as I said, talking about replacing the leadership, but of replacing the people, too. Until we have changed perceptions of our own good, the barbaric attitudes, for example, of Somalis towards each other, nothing will become of us, and we will remain paupers, subservient to the will of others.

MJ: *So the writer can contribute not so much by trying to change leaderships, as by changing people's consciousness?*

NF: Exactly.

MJ: *In your early days of being outside Somalia, you lived in Europe, but you have subsequently chosen to live in African countries. Since you have a choice in the matter, what makes you forego the obviously greater material comforts of living in Europe and North America, in order to live in Africa?*

NF: It is because I am an African, and my fiction will benefit from the experiences that I gain from living in Africa.

MJ: *Is it easier for you to recreate Somalia in your imagination when living in Africa?*

NF: Not necessarily, but I think it is easier for me to ask relevant questions, from which I am able to come to the right conclusions, if I am living in Africa. To talk politics as some Africans do while living in Europe is an absurdity, it is a betrayal of Africans to choose to speak on their behalf while living in the West. In Africa, I suffer the same troubles, the same food shortages, the same power cuts, as Somalis, and therefore I know what I am talking about if I write about someone who cannot get rice, or how to find the person who will sell a kilo of sugar. It takes days to get a luxury like that. Therefore, from that perspective, Africa helps me continue writing profitably, from within the continent. In fiction you do not need to have experienced a place or a time at first-hand in order to write about it. Fiction is part re-creation, part imagination, and I suppose part sensitivity. But you have to know what to re-create, and the experience of Africa helps me consolidate my knowledge of the situation, as well as what I already carry within me.

LITERARY FEATURE REVIEWS

Intentions and realisation in the narratives of Nawal El-Saadawi

Sabry Hafez

Memoirs of a Woman Doctor

Nawal El-Saadawi

Translated from the Arabic by Catherine Cobham

London: Saqi Books. 1988. 101pp. £9.95hb/£3.50pb

The Fall of the Imam

Nawal El-Saadawi

Translated from the Arabic by Sherif Hetata

London: Methuen. 1988. 175pp. £10.95hb

Woman Against Her Sex: a critique of Nawal El-Saadawi

Georges Tarabishi (with a rcply by Nawal El-Saadawi)

Translated from the Arabic by Basil Hatim and Elisabeth Orsini

London: Saqi Books. 1988. 232pp. £20.00hb/£8.95pb

Nawal El-Saadawi's crusade for the liberation of Arab women has earned her a great deal of fame in the West as the major Arab feminist without having had a significant impact on her standing within the context of Arab culture at large and Arabic literature in particular. As a novelist, Saadawi is by no means the best female Arab writer. Latifa Al-Zayyat, Radwa Ashur and Salwa Bakr in Egypt; Layla Ba'albaki, Emeli Nasralla and Hanan Al-Shaykh in Lebanon; Collet Khuri and Ghada Al-Samman in Syria; Samira Azzam and Sahar Khalifa in Palestine are more competent novelists. Some of these writers, particularly the Egyptian ones, even share Saadawi's political views and her stand *vis-à-vis* the struggle for women's rights. Indeed, all three Egyptian writers mentioned here suffered political persecution and imprisonment under President Anwar Sadat. Zayyat, whose first novel, *Al-bab al-Maftuh* (The Open Door, 1956) is widely considered to be one of the landmarks of Egyptian fiction, was imprisoned more than once because she played an active and extremely effective role in the cultural and political life of Egypt. Her creative writing is far more influential than that of Saadawi, for it has played a positive role not only in changing the social and political views of readers—male and female alike—but also in transforming literary sensibility and narrative techniques.

Yet, Zayyat's work, as well as that of the other Egyptian writers, is neither translated nor known in the West, a fact that raises the question: why has Saadawi attained more fame in the West than any of them? Is it only because she portrays the predicament of Arab women? Yet, all these writers address, in a more profound manner, the same issue. Why is there a gap between her standing in the West and that in her own culture? Is it because her writing is simpler and appeals to a wider public? Or is it because there is something in her writing that makes it appeal more to the Western reader than to the Arab? Do her views tell the Western reader what he or she wants to hear about the nature of the treatment of women in a Muslim culture? Has she attained her fame because she vindicates the main tenets of the traditional orientalist discourse on the position of women in Arab society, and confirms many of the prevalent stereotypes about Arab women and men?

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the fact remains that there is a wide gap between Saadawi's standing in the West and in her own Arab culture, and that her success in the West cannot be attributed to the quality of her work alone. The translation of two of her narrative works—I hesitate to call them novels—into English in one year is indicative of her success in the West, or at least of the success of feminist solidarity in influencing both the reading public and the publishing trade. But the persistence of the same issues and shortcomings in two works written thirty years apart suggests a lack of artistic and intellectual development over that period. It may also suggest a certain disregard for the intelligence of the reader at home, for whom she has been labouring the same issues over and over again, without ever stopping to ponder the reasons for the ineffectiveness of her endeavour. Perhaps a change of tactics is overdue, since the old tactics have failed to effect the required socio-political change. Even a modification of her major strategies would be desirable, in order to achieve her goals and elicit a positive response from her readers at home, a response necessary for bringing about the much-needed change. But, is she interested in the reader at home? I wonder. For I detect in her writing, in Arabic, that she is more interested in the Western than in the Arab reader. This interest motivates the narratives and leads her to state, even in her Arabic texts, facts that run counter to reality but have an appeal to the Western reader. An example of this practice is the reference to her heroine changing her name after marriage in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* (p 62), which is an issue for Western feminists but is completely false as far as Egyptian women are concerned; in Egypt, women do not change their maiden names after marriage and it requires a lengthy legal procedure if they wish to do so.

Memoirs of a Woman Doctor, sensitively translated by Catherine Cobham, tells the life story of an Egyptian girl's resentment of her being female, and her quest for recognition in the world of men as an equal. Her achievements in school, at the Faculty of Medicine, and later as a working doctor are portrayed

as being a direct result of her suppression of her own sexuality. Her first marriage, in which she was sought as a mother-figure rather than as a wife and companion, collapsed. After working closely with nature in the countryside, and with underprivileged peasants and victims of rape, the heroine meets a musician who appears in the text as a magical figure. She falls in love with him at first sight, and the happy ending shows us the militant heroine melting in his arms and expressing her affection by baking him a cake and cleaning the flat. 'He held me close and embraced me until all my being melted into his' (p 97). The happy ending sees the taming of the shrew, the transformation of a confused woman into a more traditional one who falls head over heels in love as soon as she meets the right man who is capable of penetrating the skin-deep feminism to reveal the traditional woman underneath, ready to shed her tears and seek his protection:

I hid my face against his chest, seeking his protection, clinging to him. I felt as if I had been stripped of my past life and had gone back to being a child learning to walk. I'd begun to need a hand to support me. For the first time in my life I felt that I needed someone else, something I hadn't felt even about my mother. I buried my head in his chest and wept tears of quiet relief. (pp 100-1)

Reading this happy ending one cannot help asking: what was all the fuss about? Does the solution of an individual's problem eradicate the social ones? Has love the magic touch capable of dissipating deeply rooted social attitudes?

Reading the book as a rudimentary autobiography enables the reader to accept its naivety and to sympathise with its artless, unsophisticated heroine in her struggle to come to terms with her own sexuality. It also diminishes the reader's demand for a balanced portrayal of a young woman at loggerheads both with her own femininity and with the prevalent perception of the female in her immediate surroundings. In these terms, the book's subjectivity is accepted as an inherent part of a true record of the author's controversial and often problematic struggle to reverse the scale of social perceptions of male and female roles and standings. The contradictions of the text, and the subjective exaggerations in its depiction of social ills and the double standard of morality, can be tolerated as merely autobiographical. Indeed, the only justification of the book's predominantly monophonic narrative is its autobiographical nature that assumes an overtly subjective view of the world. But the author denies its autobiographical nature and demands that we treat it as a novel, a test that is difficult to withstand.

In her reply to Tarabishi (dated London, April 1987), Saadawi takes him to task for pointing out the autobiographical nature of the book: 'If I have chosen the character of a woman doctor in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, this in no way means that the woman doctor is Nawal El-Saadawi' (p 190). Yet, two months later in her prefatory author's note to the book (dated London, June

1987) she stated that, 'it expressed my feelings and experiences as a woman who was a doctor at work, but still performed the role of a wife and a mother at home' (p 7). Saadawi seems to be confusing the autobiographical with autobiography without much awareness of the contradictory nature of her statements. *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* appears to be a clearly autobiographical work, if not an autobiography. She wrote it in 1957 when she was in her twenties and had nothing but her own experience to draw upon. But more important, narrative strategies in this text suggest a complete identification between the voice of the narrator (the unnamed heroine) and that of the author. The majority of first novels in Arabic literature are strongly autobiographical, and in this tradition, the author tends to be thinly disguised behind an unnamed hero, the text always being narrated in the first person. *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* resorts to both these devices, and draws heavily upon the life of its author.

Treating the text as a novel exerts taxing literary demands. The reader's expectations are enhanced by relating it to a different set of conventions, and all measures of leniency associated with the reception of autobiographical narrative are precluded. As a fictional character, the unnamed heroine of *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* invokes in its reader more ridicule than sympathy or understanding. Her pathetic quest for a complete suppression of her femininity leads her to twist facts and exhibit attitudes as bigoted and unacceptable as those of her male enemies, against whose attitudes she wages her holy war. Her racist views of the black man who works as the porter of their apartment building (the English translation moderates this by twice omitting the word 'black') are as piteous as those of the males who treat her as a sex object. Her childish behaviour and bookish crusade against her own sexuality is treated as an ideological battle, but the character itself is neither ideologically authoritative, nor independent from its own author. The heroine cannot be perceived as an original character with fully weighted ideological conceptions of her own, and with internal motivations that convince the reader of the originality of her ideas or of their being rooted in a complex social reality. She is rather a mere vehicle of the author's views, and is unable to disentangle herself from these views, even when they run counter to the logic of narrated events.

Assuming, with Saadawi, that the heroine is different from the author, we can endeavour to investigate the relationship of the two. The heroine interests her not as some manifestation of reality that possesses specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific profile assembled out of unambiguous and objective features which, taken together, forge the identity of that particular heroine. The heroine interests her as a particular and rigidly static point of view on a world that is dogmatically perceived as inimical, and is cancelled out from the text to avoid any tiresome interaction with its various forces. The text, therefore, is not interested in the degree to which the heroine

is sociologically typical, nor in how she appears to the world or even how the world appears to her, but rather in how she appears to herself. Such a view of the heroine demands a richly introspective character and a sophisticated method of discovery. Instead we are faced with a one-dimensional character who is uninterested in anything but her own quest to attain recognition on purely masculine terms, despite the fact that her ideological views dictate a multi-dimensional portrayal of social reality which is in short supply in the text.

The heroine aspires to play God, the all-knowing and almighty, but neither the compassionate nor the merciful, a God with a narrow field of intellectual vision who gets angry very easily and strikes down characters with a stroke of the pen. After all, most characters are of the cardboard variety, and the first-person narrative makes them easy to knock down. The heroine who dispenses with characters so easily becomes confused with the author, for the heavy authorial presence is one of the general characteristics of Saadawi's narrative, and this is not in any way helped by her desire to play God on both the social and narrative plains. The clearly detectable presence of the omniscient author usually mars first-person narrative, purges it of its introspective nature and sheds doubt on its usefulness as a narrative strategy.

This presence is as evident in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* as it is in *The Fall of the Imam*, whose narrative structure, though different, is still dependent on first-person narrative techniques. The structure of *The Fall of the Imam* could have allowed Saadawi to create her own version of polyphonic narrative, capable of elaborating highly complex ideological issues. She allows her different characters to speak in turn, giving us their own versions of certain aspects of the story. But alas, they all speak with a unified language, the language of the author and not that of the character, which takes into account neither their different socio-psychological backgrounds, nor their opposing ideological stances. What unfolds in the book is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single objective consciousness, but rather a group of fragmentary characters who are objects of authorial discourse, and not, despite their first-person narrative, subjects of their own directly signifying discourse. This fact calls into question the motivation of the device, and the logic of using such a demanding technique for a task than can be achieved by resorting to the usual functions of characterisation and plot development.

The Fall of the Imam is the story of an illegitimate woman who discovers that her real father is the Imam, a political leader who exploits religion for his own ends. His despotic nature and fanatical views are portrayed as a product of an inferiority complex, for the Imam is not only obnoxiously vulgar, ugly, cruel and stupid, but he is also from a low and poor background. The author seems to be equating poverty with immorality and wealth with good manners and solid ethical values, a position that is even incompatible with many of her

own ideological views. In spite of all his weaknesses and repulsive dispositions, the Imam has miraculously managed to attain power and employ a group of people who are more intelligent and more highly educated than himself, and who come from better backgrounds, to help him run a highly corrupt state apparatus. The text is reticent when it comes to explaining how he has succeeded in accomplishing this, and in achieving, in addition, a personality cult that enables his corrupt and universally hated regime to survive after his death.

As for the Imam's illegitimate daughter, who is presented as a female version of Christ, she is as unintelligible as her father. Although her father is a false God, her mother no Virgin Mary and she no saviour, the text insists on calling her Bint Allah (literally the daughter of God), and endows her mother, who is a combination of a prostitute and a belly dancer, with martyrdom. Here is a clear example of the wide gulf between the author's intentions and their narrative realisation. It is indeed a sound feminist idea to invert the story of Christ and posit the heroine as a modern female version. It is also viable to sublimate abused and prostituted women to exalted martyrdom. But to bring this from the realm of vague intentions into real narrative, capable of imparting a symbolic layer of meaning, requires a poetically creative and competent presentation, rather than the crude and obtrusive treatment of the heroine in *The Fall of the Imam*. Although the very orientation of the narrative makes hers the prevalent voice in the text, she fails to articulate the motivations for her war against the Imam, whose recognition she neither seeks nor respects. She appears, therefore, to be swimming in waters that are too shallow. Here again, one sees another example of how Saadawi lays her hands on a goldmine but fails to emerge with any ore. Setting the daughter against her father and making her a major threat to his corrupt establishment could have been a potentially devastating blow to the conception of patriarchy. But to enable such an idea to come to fruition requires a very sensitive treatment and a profoundly elaborate process of *éducation sentimentale*, of which there is not a trace in *The Fall of the Imam*. The heroine's cultural background and the circumstances of her upbringing do not prepare her for an active political role, yet her crusade against the Imam acquires certain political resonance though it is based only on vengeance. The political and ideological resonance of her campaign against the Imam is surgically implanted and we are asked to accept it as natural. Her feelings towards, and views of, her father lack the complexity of the love-hate relationship which might be expected in such a situation. One may surmise that the author's antipathy towards the Imam, and all male characters, is designed to help her heroine justify her behaviour towards them. The text has many obnoxious men, and a few less obnoxious women, but there is little interaction between them, for the author seems to hope that by the mere cumulative effect of the juxtaposition of chapters in which her characters speak in turn, she can create the desired unity.

The book is an attempt to write an allegorical satire based on the life and tribulations of the late President Anwar Sadat, which is marred by ostensibly sarcastic, but clearly vindictive motives. One month before his assassination in 1981, whose detailed description is repeatedly portrayed in the book, Sadat was responsible for the detention of more than 1,500 Egyptian intellectuals and politicians (Saadawi amongst them), who were released by his successor, President Mubarak, after his assassination. Many Egyptian writers, indeed the majority of them, have experienced various forms of oppression by the state, including imprisonment for longer periods than that of Saadawi, but only a few have allowed their personal vendetta to affect their writing in the way Saadawi has done. The personal suffering of intellectuals should not blur their vision or impair their judgement. The writer's responsibility, and particularly those with an honourable cause such as Saadawi's, is far greater than a personal vendetta.

We are not dealing in *The Fall of the Imam* with political statements but with a novel. If it were a political statement on the errors of Sadat, whose policies had, and continue to have, a disastrous effect on Egypt and the Arab world, I would wholeheartedly have supported Saadawi, and praised her courage. If it were a treatise on the narrow-mindedness of Muslim fundamentalists, their plunder of Islam and their aberrational—often apocryphal—interpretation of its tenets, I would have upheld her argument and reinforced her rational stance. But it is a novel, and it is one thing to write a strong article attacking the fanatical policies of Sadat, Numeiri or Khomeini, and another to write a novel whose main character, the Imam, is based on those three leaders put together, in order to ridicule the patriarchal system and expose the contradictions inherent in the mechanics of oppression and exploitation of religious dogma. Indeed, writing a successful novel about these issues would be of greater importance and would have more lasting impact than treating them in an article, for a novel is capable of particularising the abstract and solidifying the argument by offering it a palpable form. It can also provide the reader with an insight into the dynamics of the process that generates such political conditions or ideological thinking. But the emphasis here is on a 'successful' novel; as is suggested by Marshall McLuhan's proposition that 'the medium is the message', bad novels do not make sound political statements, with all the good intentions in the world.

The author's dedication of the novel, and her preface, attempt to suggest to the reader how to receive its events, and hint at both its political and feminist interpretation. Indeed, Doris Lessing in her comments on the dust jacket responds to these pointers and declares it 'a tale of women suffering under harsh Islamic rule', pointing out both its feminist posture and anti-Islamic stance. But the novel has an equally political message that can reach its Arab reader more easily than its Western one. This is so because the Arab reader would identify the shadow of Sadat and his half-English second wife behind

the murky figure of the Imam and his first lady. Many details of the Imam's life and his physical description—from his stammer to 'the patch of dark scaly skin like a mulberry' (p 96) on his forehead—are clear allusions to Sadat. Other characters—the leader of the opposition, the great writer, the bodyguard and the belly dancer, Gawaher—can easily be identified by an Arab reader as real public figures in the political and artistic life of Egypt. Furthermore, some of the events in the text are rumours circulating in Egypt, and its central event is a literal description of the assassination of Sadat.

Yet, despite its reference to outside events and personalities, *The Fall of the Imam* is not a realistic novel portraying the socio-political life of Egypt under the autocratic rule of Sadat, but rather an attempt to use this material to advance certain ideological statements concerning the position of women in Third World countries, and the hypocritical exploitation of religion by the state. To achieve its aim the text does not refrain from resorting to generalisations or twisting facts, including universally known ones, such as its twist of the frame story of *The Arabian Nights* to serve its ideological purpose (p 59). Unlike Saadawi's one-dimensional characterisation, the frame story of *The Arabian Nights*, with its rich interplay with the enframed stories, does not depict Shahryar as a despicable villain intent on destroying women for no apparent reason, as Saadawi makes him appear, but as a wronged husband who has been outraged by the infidelity of his wife. In his outrage he loses confidence in all women and decides to marry a new virgin every night and send her to her death the following morning until Shahrazad, through the rubrics of elaborate narrative, educates him into abandoning his ruthless conduct. This elaborate process of re-education, in which Shahrazad uses the power of narrative to dispel death and buy the valuable time necessary for changing the erroneous views of her husband, is reduced in Saadawi's interpretation, and her deliberate misrepresentation of the frame story, to a demonstration of mere masculine folly and men's double standards of morality.

The Fall of the Imam is a political allegory consisting of thinly disguised characters who have no symbolic value. This is so because most characters derive their credibility neither from apt characterisation, nor from the internal cohesion of the plot, but rather from their reference to real figures in Egypt. The fictional world of the book strives for plausibility, and derives it from its constant reference to extrinsic data. For those who cannot relate its events or characters to their historical background, the book appears as an ambiguous fantasy, full of repetition, and marked by the burdensome authorial presence which engenders cardboard characters, males and females alike, and generates a heavy sense of didacticism. The ambiguity is not of the artistic type that imparts semantic richness and endows a work with various hermeneutic possibilities, but is born out of confusion. Although the author speaks for all her characters, she seems out of sympathy with all of them bar one. On a purely artistic level, the book raises a number of crucial questions: Is it possible to

write a novel without an iota of sympathy for, or understanding of, its main characters? Can a vendetta motivate plausible narrative? Or do the blinding qualities of vengeance rid the narrative of any sense of credibility?

As in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, all men in *The Fall of the Imam* are bigoted, cruel, stupid, misogynists, perpetrators of crime, and above all, sexually impotent. Although the English translation of *The Fall of the Imam* is in many ways better than the original Arabic text which is plagued with many grammatical errors and stylistic weaknesses, it still lacks the coherence of convincing allegorical narrative that can be of relevance outside its own culture. Yet the book has a more mature narrative than its predecessor. Here the author experiments with a complex theme, more elaborate narrative structure, and new techniques. In this work Saadawi endeavours to create a political allegory, a genre which has only a few precedents in modern Arabic literature. The novelty of the experiment, and the lack of clear artistic conventions in dealing with this type of narrative in Arabic literature, may account for the text's rudimentary structure.

Yet, apart from confirming for the Western reader the hackneyed stereotype, 'think the worst of the Muslims and it will probably be true,' the book offers little insight into what makes a person a fanatic, or motivates a leader to become oppressive and despotic. On the artistic plain, one cannot understand the oppressive presence of the omniscient author without relating it to Saadawi's desire to inverse the patriarchal order. But the inversion of social order does not mean a correction of its inherent injustice, rather a reinstating of these injustices in a new, reversed form. Although the allegorical nature of the text, and its ideological implications, necessitate a rich dialogue between the various arguments and viewpoints, Saadawi's discourse in the book is of a monological rather than a dialogical nature in the Bakhtinian sense of the term. Unlike the polyphonic narrative of Fyodor Dostoyevsky which unifies highly heterogeneous and incompatible material, the compositional principle of Saadawi's narrative is monophonic, reducing the plurality of consciousness to an ideological common denominator which is so simplistic as to verge on the ridiculous.

The critical assessment of Saadawi's work is an extremely difficult task. Her road to literary creativity is paved with good causes and honourable intentions. She aspires to achieve justice, and to fight for her sisters' rights, equality and self-determination, in a traditional and highly patriarchal society. Any treatment of her work has to acquire a fine balance between appreciating her good intentions and pointing out the shortcomings of her literary attainments. Sometimes one has to tolerate the exaggeration in making her case as a product of the difficult battle in which she is engaged. Introducing new ideas in such a conservative milieu warrants certain exaggerations which are by their very nature incompatible with literary presentation. This leaves her critics in a quandary, and has led some of them to advise her to confine her writing to militant

theoretical prose. The translation of Tarabishi's arduous study on her work reflects this dilemma; for despite the fact that most of her works are available in English translation, when her publishers sought a critical introduction to her work in English, they found nothing but Tarabishi's book, the sole study on her works available only in Arabic.

Translating Tarabishi's book, which is neither comprehensive nor sympathetic, into English, is in a way symptomatic of the paradoxical situation created by the gap between Saadawi's standing in the West and in her own culture, and more significantly of the failure of her work to exert a profound influence on either the educated men of her culture whose support is vital for bringing about the radical changes she has been advocating, or on the condition of Arab women. This is so, as the title of Tarabishi's book reflects, because of the intractable interaction between a conscious pro-feminist ideology and a subconscious anti-feminist stance. Unfortunately, the English translation omits the last chapter of Tarabishi's book, which focuses on Saadawi's theoretical works (such as *Woman and Sex*, 1972); some of which are available in English translation (for example, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 1980). This omission weakens the book's argument and affects its structure. Tarabishi's work relies on developing its argument partly through a critical analysis of her creative works using a Freudian psychoanalytical approach, and partly through consolidating these views through a detailed discussion of Saadawi's theoretical works in which she advances many of the views inferred from the analysis of her creative works. Removing one part of the argument tilts the balance of the book and lays it open to Saadawi's attack in her reply which replaces the omitted chapter.

In this respect I share with Saadawi her criticism of Tarabishi for depending solely on the Freudian version of psychoanalysis in dealing with literary texts. Indeed psychoanalysis alone can neither explain the intricate nature of literary works, nor exhaust their hermeneutic possibilities. It can only shed some light on the inner contradictions of fictive characters and in doing so it misses out many aspects of the artistic text. Tarabishi did not suggest a complete congruence between the heroines and the author, but he maintains that it is possible to infer the writer's attitudes and ideas from an analysis of the characters that she has created. Although his restrictive and often reductive psychoanalytical approach weakens his argument, his main aim is to demonstrate through his critical analysis of Saadawi's heroines that the author's anti-feminine stand jeopardises her feminist stance. Yet, in certain works Saadawi's critical portrayal of her female characters, which ostensibly appears to be anti-feminist, succeeds, on a deeper level, in demonstrating the scars of oppression on these characters.

Saadawi criticises Tarabishi for psychoanalysing her through her heroines. Yet she does not hesitate to do the same to him, and through him, all men in the Third World. She tells us that 'Tarabishi, like all men in the Third World,

seems more impressed by women writers from the alien New World of Europe. Arab women, on the other hand, even if they achieve as much as their foreign counterparts and write as well as them, and perhaps with more depth, are not regarded as of equal status. Why on earth has Tarabishi only cited a foreigner writing in English? Isn't there one Arab woman worthy of quoting?" (p 195). The foreigner mentioned in Saadawi's quotation here is the eminent feminist, Germaine Greer (who is not, by the way, 'a foreigner writing in English' for English is her mother tongue; unless Saadawi's use of the term 'foreigner' is a direct rendering of the Arabic *khawagaya* (a white woman), a racist remark that belongs by implication with that of the 'black' man mentioned above). Leaving that aside, it seems that Saadawi is squabbling with the form of Tarabishi's remark rather than its substance, in order to psychoanalyse him. It does not occur to her that Tarabishi's praise for Greer is not because she is a 'foreigner', but merely because Greer's writing has more depth and insight than that of her own. In her reply, Saadawi seizes the opportunity of Tarabishi's quotation of Greer to attribute to him, and all men of the Third World, xenophilia. But reviewing her own reply (not to mention her numerous theoretical works) reveals that one can easily level the same charge against her. In her reply she quotes only foreign writers and refers, for example, to Lacan and not to his Egyptian associate, Mustafa Safwan. Her squabble with Tarabishi over a great number of issues fails to offer the reader a new insight into her fictional world. This is so because the problem is not that her characters have failed to humanise the world, but rather that she has failed to humanise her characters.

Es'kia Mphahlele: a divided self?

Mafika Gwala

Renewal Time

Es'kia Mphahlele

London: Readers International. 1988. 215pp. £9.95hb/£4.95pb

Reading the short stories of the south African writer and critic, Es'kia Mphahlele, and the two essays that introduce and conclude this collection, was like going through a refresher course in terms of the need for reassessment. It laid every cultural and creative effort open to question.

The short stories were published at different periods when the author lived in exile. The two essays that sandwich them were written after the author's return to South Africa in 1977. Two of the stories included are set in independ-

ent Africa. The rest are placed within the South African context. The apartheid scenario is widely covered: segregation by race; the forced division of the labour market; urban social control; the political coercion of state power and cultural alienation. These themes, interestingly, run through all the stories; and the author painstakingly explores them, one by one. The flow of connections between Mphahlele's cultural images of the South African experience is substantiated by his characters in the stories. They are able to speak for themselves: their minds and anxieties, their physical survival. This way they remind us of the inherent conflict in every culture, and of the fluidity in changing situations.

Given the role of the written word, and its different dimensions within the verbal-act, the generation of Mphahlele (the Drum Generation) wrote what they saw—within the limitations of the time of 'Grand Apartheid'—when blacks were just beginning to grapple with the issue of what to do about white domination, since it was already self-explanatory that there was need for a resistance stronger than words and protest marches. The potential worth of the literary exploration of political alternatives was beginning to be realised in the writing of the 1950s in declared statement, as writers confronted the problem of relating their observations of apartheid to the political struggle. What emerged from that observation was a gloomy but realistic literature of a universal character. It was what an Afrikaner writer, André Brink, would—ten or eleven years later—talk of in these terms: 'What the writer does essentially implies that his work, if it is worthwhile, acts as a conscience in the world.'

Like the other writers of the Drum Generation, Mphahlele became our burn-waggon brigadier, reminding us of the fire-hazards blacks have had to brave. In so far as writers can affirm the process of struggle, most of the cultural gains have been made against the background of economic exploitation. All the stories in this collection hold that message; Mphahlele's exile seems to have concentrated his focus upon that economic factor. How his literary realisations measure up on the cultural metre-rule is another matter. But only after his return from exile has Mphahlele been able to open up his literary output to the influence of the historical cycle.

Through the stories the author indicates that he was one of those writers who were directly confronted by the political truths involved. Yet he himself admits to having been cautious. As South African culture assumed greater contradictions in terms of the relative generating of meaning and reality, the violation of that culture had become such a negative spectacle that an Afrikaner writer had to point out that: 'Violence is the language culture speaks when no other valid articulation is left open to it.' And, further, that: 'Understanding violence may well be the first step towards an understanding of culture.' These words by Brink span almost three decades since Mphahlele's autobiographical *Down Second Avenue* (1961).

Of his return to South Africa in 1977, Mphahlele says; 'I had returned to a country where the black man has learned to wait, to endure, survive.' Had the

children of South Africa not negated the wait-and-see mentality beyond reversal at Soweto on 16 June 1976? Yet, the statement stands true, ironically, if in his peaceful way Mphahlele is saying: Time is on our side. In that sense it does not become an expression of any paralysis of resolve.

Yet, on his return, Mphahlele found himself answerable to certain things about his country: nothing had changed. There was the problem of his academic position within the concepts of 'apartheid' authority, versus the liberation struggle. Within that, came the question of his socio-political responses in the process of the struggle for a non-racial, democratic society. In a situation where literary endeavour is a political liability, he failed to see political involvement as a natural extension of cultural engagement. That has been his chief dilemma. He is still striving to make himself feel at home—in the all-embracing sense of that word. It therefore becomes questionable as to how in his case, as he maintains, 'The bonds that have held us to original African experience . . . have remained intact during our travels.' Meanwhile, at home, the struggle has been continuing, and already, blacks have been battling with the 'how' of liberation, in both the literary and the practical sense.

To a certain degree, though, Mphahlele's controversial return was a courageous move. Returning to one's country of birth is a right, not a concession or a privilege. Also, the return has helped to prove a few truths to those—like Turfloop's 'sympathetic' academics who supported Mphahlele's return, and were riding high on Bantustan embourgeoisement—that nothing has changed in South Africa's basic structures. Mphahlele's return has assisted in the exposure of the cosmetic nature of the changes.

Mphahlele's stories depict an urban reality, not from the point of view of working-class concerns, but compelled by the umbilical severance from his rural childhood environment. Of that he says: 'We were urban. There was this feeling of wanting to stake a claim. The writing was a way of asserting one's urban reality, of saying things like, "This is where one is—even if it is a slum." Things happened.'* The two stories set in independent Africa also have an urban context. This is how he comments on his return to the rural background of his early youth:

Pitch darkness, riotous moonlight, night sounds, boulder-heaving rivers, orchestrated by stories about giants and huge snakes before which man humbled himself—all these filled my life as a boy with terror. Now I drive from Pietersburg in the moonlight . . . I can't help feeling the protective embrace of the silence as I make my passage . . .

The mixed feeling of hoping for these inner gates to be opened becomes as exaggerated as Mphahlele's life-long failure to appreciate the extrality of modern life within the rural-urban change process. As the urban changes, so does the rural change—irreversibly. The rural landscape is being dotted with 'rural slums', a problem that Mphahlele fails to confront. He comments: 'I

* From the reviewer's interview with Es'kia Mphahlele in Johannesburg, in September 1987.

stop to contemplate the serenity I have rediscovered in the northern Transvaal landscape.'

Despite his delayed admiration of the countryside, Mphahlele has discovered that we cannot dodge the circumstances of our cultural alienation by running off to the glorious African past, though we can draw some sustenance from that past. In the early story, 'Mrs Plum', this is underlined by Karabo's return to her rural home-village at Zeerust. The return places her on the threshold between an assimilationist acceptance of white righteousness and a national resistance consciousness that rejects conformity to one-sided cultural terms. In the same story the introduction of Lilian Ngoyi's adult literacy classes to domestic servants makes the system of white domination appear less invincible. Karabo goes back to work for Mrs Plum with a new self-assuredness. The story is a challenge to cultural imperialism, and it poses the question: what role can our literature play in the struggle against imperialism?

On the subject of identity, Karel Almeida, in 'A Point of Identity', is of a Portuguese father and a Venda mother. He stays at Pretoria's Corner B—a location designated for African tenancy. Though, to all cultural purposes, Karel lives as an African, he is forced to choose a 'coloured' identity registration for economic survival at his place of work. At the same time, he is trapped between losing his African way of life with his African common-law wife in Corner B and not gaining a 'coloured' identity card. Time and again he has to reinstate his 'colouredness', just in case officialdom declares him to be a native and therefore subject to lower wages and lesser privileges. In all the stories, the author successfully uses 'historical junction' to make different backgrounds converge towards a reality that combines various facets of African life in the storytelling. The author shows a keen sense of observation. His characters come vividly to life, such as the native school-inspector in 'Grieg on a stolen piano', who has to put up with a self-centred second wife and with the segregated schools inspectorate, where black inspectors are expected to say 'baas' to their white colleagues. The story carries other traits of South African racism as well. Mphahlele's gift of clarity, and his handling of tense situations, make him one of the accomplished storytellers in South Africa. In 'The Ballad of Oyo', Mama Jimi's natural caginess at market bargaining stems from the African woman's determined resolve to overcome her exploited status, by being her independent self as breadwinner and mother. The collection as a whole stresses the sociological nature of experience and expression, within the stories' rejection of the predicament of modern Man as necessarily individualist.

The role of the written word exists side by side with the further potential for literary exploration and the intention to declare, unremittingly, a cultural or political statement. That statement inevitably becomes a call for change. South Africa is in a state of cultural war. There is, moreover, the problem of Mphahlele, as a former exile, wanting to confront the hindrances to the democratic struggle, yet without taking a definite stand within the process.

Renewal Time is effectively a reassessment of Mphahlele's own writing. It has a realism which modifies 'The Unbroken Song' into the unbroken bond between the present and the past, and between the present and the future. Yet sometimes one is tempted to ask, what is this renewal time? Through his introductory and concluding essays, Mphahlele is seeking to establish the inter-relatedness involved in going through the mill together as South Africans. In the process, he has discovered that the written word as testimony is not absolute: 'In each community the renewal has a cultural purpose, its own.' The two essays, 'The Sounds Begin' (introduction) and 'Renewal Time' (conclusion) show that the author has come full circle. He has walked into new beginnings. After his stay in the USA had made him feel unstable within Western culture, his wish to return home crowned his experience. By his own admission, if it is the genuine written word he has structured, that written word will by its own inner momentum mould itself to his awareness as a black South African—with all the socio-historical connotations that implies. It is a better fate than the mere plastic shine of the pen and the slippery feel of the pen-hand.

Thus, Mphahlele's haunted notions of darkness in his reminiscences of childhood have a scorpion-tail's twistedness. He pretends that he could have loved the urban ghetto of Marabastad and Lebowa's rural earthiness equally well. This has made him be seen (in the aftermath of Soweto) as a divided self. He has perhaps been split between being solely a writer, and assuming the role of cultural commentator in his position as elder writer. In each instance, neutrality is no longer excusable, and the two essays hint at his understanding of this. At some stage he confesses: 'You won't get a great black novel until you've become integrated.' Again, he says: 'As soon as the white man has learned to realize that he is an African and no longer a European he will then begin to write an African poem.' (As quoted by Brink in 'On Culture and Apartheid', *Mapmakers*, 1983, p 81.)

Mphahlele, unlike those with a half unlit candle who have sat and cursed the darkness, urges that there is still light in the future of South Africa's literary involvement and cultural struggles. For he has maintained the self-discipline and consistency that writing calls for, in the face of the historical, sociological, linguistic and ideological conditions of creativity in South Africa. He transmits to us the racial meanings, social implications and cultural tendencies in a divided society. The combining of stories and the two essays helps us to an understanding of that society's literary and social history.

The reviewer having no cards to spook * on literary expectations will hazard a guess. Just as working with and through language draws upon the technical requirements of a subject-mutation process, Mphahlele has still to provide us explicitly with the '1950s' View' on cultural imperialism. He must surely have it up his sleeve. It should be well worth the wait.

* [A term meaning to mark and read the playing cards of one's opponents - Ed.]

LITERARY REVIEWS

Taking fiction beyond the text

Matigari

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Translated from the Gĩkũyũ by Wangũi wa Goro

Oxford: Heinemann International. 1989. 175pp. £10.95hb

Ngũgĩ's sixth novel, *Matigari* (1987), his second written originally in Gĩkũyũ, is a fable. 'This novel is based partly on an oral story about a man looking for a cure for an illness,' he says in his note to the English edition. 'Helped on by the different people, he eventually reaches his destination, where he finds the necessary cure. The story is simple and direct, and it dispenses with fixed time and place.' Yet, these are new times. 'Mau Mau is Coming Back', the title of a chapter in Ngũgĩ's *Barrel of a Pen: resistance to repression in neo-colonial Kenya* (1983),* is realised in the new work. The Kenya Land and Freedom Army of the 1950s—Mau Mau—returns in the form of the protagonist, Matigari ma Njirũngi, a name which translates as 'the patriots who survived the bullets'. He returns from the forest and, like Rip Van Winkle (a link made explicitly on page 118), he must 'first go home and sleep off the fatigue of many years'. But the country he finds shocks him: orphaned children charged a fee to fight for scraps in rubbish heaps, women who are prostituted, a ruling regime so scared that it gaols workers, students, 'vagrants'. Matigari wanders all over the country looking for truth and justice. What he sees instead is an exploitative new elite of loyalists serving its own material interests by acting as agents for outside capitalists.

This comes as no surprise to readers of Ngũgĩ's work. Indeed, it is predictable. Sometimes it seems that Ngũgĩ's desire to fight neo-colonialism leads to aesthetic flaws. Matigari must be seen to be so innocent about the new country that he gets into trouble and into gaol, thus making us wonder how he could have been successful as a Mau Mau: did he merely speak the truth and defeat the British? However, before one concludes that Ngũgĩ's writing is so formulaic as to be flawed, one must bear in mind that Ngũgĩ has been attempting to take fiction beyond the text (one might say that this is what Salman Rushdie has done in a spectacular way). Ngũgĩ is writing to change society, to bring about social justice, but can writing do this by itself? Books without action are not enough, says *Matigari*. Ngũgĩ's earlier novels had addressed the idea that if one found the truth from books and spoke it, the walls of Jericho would collapse. Yet action without book-knowledge will not work either: an old woman tells Matigari, 'Books are the modern stars. Those who study them are the wise men of today. Why do you think they are being harassed so much?' In the absence of action to bring about social change, Ngũgĩ has no choice but to try to effect that change through a book.

Ngũgĩ says in the introduction (which is addressed to 'the reader/listener', thus stressing the fact that this is an oral work) that the story, actions, characters and country

* For a Literary Profile of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o by Simon Gikandi, see *Third World Quarterly* 11(1) January 1989, pp 148–56.

are imaginary. Of course, it would be clear to readers/listeners in Kenya that the Gĩkũyũ work is about Kenya, more so because of the target of Ngũgĩ's most satirical barbs. The Minister of Truth and Justice says in a public speech to the workers:

The Permanent Professor of the History of Parrotology, the Ph.D. in Parrotology and the editor of the *Daily Parrot* will give evidence to show that, historically, philosophically and journalistically speaking, it is those who teach Marxism—in other words, communism—who spoil our students and our workers. That is why they should be detained without trial. Isn't that so, Professor? (p 106)

And then 'the permanent professor, the PhD holder and the newspaper editor stood up and sang three verses from *Songs of a Parrot*'. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ says that President Moi had elaborated on his philosophy 'in words that beat the most inventive satiric genius when he demanded that all Kenyans must sing like parrots'. It is therefore not surprising that the government of Kenya responded to the novel with hostility.

But what about the readers of the English translation? Is there anything in the work for us? This is the first time we are reading a work of Ngũgĩ's translated into English by someone else. The work reads very well, and except for the satirical portions, it does not always read like the Ngũgĩ we are familiar with. It has some of the 'neutral' tone of Ngũgĩ's first two novels. For example, note the poetic quality of the following extract:

A white man and a black man sat on horseback on one side of the narrow tarmac road next to the gate. Their horses were exactly alike. Both had silky brown bodies. The riders too wore clothes of the same colour. Indeed, the only difference between the two men was their skin colour. Even their postures as they sat in the saddle were exactly the same. The way they held their whips and the reins—no difference. And they spoke in the same manner. (p 43)

This passage could almost be by Wilson Harris. Such writing balances the fact that we see no new ideas in this work. Ngũgĩ has already explored colonialism/ decolonisation/ neo-colonialism. In fact, the new work takes a step back in its presentation of women. The chief female character is once again a prostitute who was actually a victim of the real prostitutes of the neo-colony: she twice saves Matigari by doing the thing she has vowed never to do, namely, sleeping with a policeman in order to obtain the gaol keys and set the prisoners free. But she is never given a chance to grow by her own actions to a fuller consciousness, unlike Wanjia in *Petals of Blood* (1977) or Wariĩga in *Devil on the Cross* (1982). The point of this fable is that it is continuing the unfinished war against the exploiters. The battle lines are drawn. The novel tells us that there are only two types of people now: the patriots and the sell-outs.

Ngũgĩ writes from an exile which he had not intended to enter. He had gone to Britain for the launching of the English translation of *Devil on the Cross*, his first novel in Gĩkũyũ (written in detention), when a strange coup and counter-coup took place in Kenya and he was unable to return. How does one keep on writing and still making an impact, when there is nothing new to say? One way to do it is to go back to the old way of telling a story, the fable. The fable in *Matigari*, with its biblical undertones (Ngũgĩ establishes Africa's primary link with Christianity through Christ's taking refuge in Egypt and through Ethiopia's having the oldest Christian churches), reads very well. The short sections in Part Two begin:

He went to many market-places in search of truth and justice . . . He went to shopping centres

... He visited many eating places ... He went to the crossroads ... He wandered across the farmlands ... He went to the law courts ... He travelled on foot. He rode on donkey carts. He got lifts on bicycles. He travelled in *Matatus*, buses and jorries. He travelled by train. He went to all the places where people were likely to gather. And in all the places he asked the one question: How and where can a person girded with a belt of peace find Truth and Justice?

This is a book in *Gikūyū* that the people will read and talk about. In *Weep Not, Child* (1964), Ngũgĩ had mentioned the way people mythified Dedan Kimathi; in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), the people ironically mythified Mugo. The same thing happens here after Matigari stops a policeman from whipping a woman, Gũthera. He becomes a mythic revolutionary to the people within the text: he is ubiquitous. When people wonder who Matigari was, the text says, 'Or was he only an idea, an image, in people's minds?' (p 158). *Outside* the text, Ngũgĩ tells us in his note:

By January 1987, intelligence reports had it that peasants in Central Kenya were whispering and talking about a man called Matigari who was roaming the whole country making demands about truth and justice. There were orders for his immediate arrest, but the police discovered that Matigari was only a fictional character in a book of the same name. In February 1987, the police raided all the bookshops and seized every copy of the novel.

Ngũgĩ's first important work was a one-act play produced at Makerere University College in 1962 for the Interhall English Competition, *This Wound in My Heart*, in which a Mau Mau leader returns home. The play was to have been produced for the Uganda Drama Festival but it was banned by the (pre-independence) authorities. The fate of Ngũgĩ's new work illustrates his success in taking his fiction beyond the text. As he says in his introduction, 'Matigari, the fictional hero, and the novel (the in-between-covers territory of his only habitation) have been effectively banned in Kenya. With the publication of this English edition, they have joined their author in exile.'

PETER NAZARETH

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The mystery of identity

Solitaire

Tahar Ben Jelloun

Translated from the French by Gareth Stanton and Nick Hindley

London: Quartet. 1988. 111pp. £9.95hb

The Sand Child

Tahar Ben Jelloun

Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan

London: Quartet. 1988. 163pp. £11.95hb

When in 1987 the Prix Goncourt, France's major literary award, went to the Moroccan writer, Tahar Ben Jelloun, for *La nuit sacrée* ('The sacred night'), he rejoiced in the

name of other North African authors before him: his compatriot, Driess Chraïbi, and Algerian writers such as Mohammed Dib and Kateb Yacine. Yet the prize was awarded to a man who, far from being unknown, had for many years reached a wide public in countries where French is spoken as a first or second language. Two of his books have recently been translated into English, *Solitaire* and *The Sand Child*. Together, they are a timely introduction to one of the major writers of the Maghreb.

Tahar Ben Jelloun is a full-time writer, with two parallel lines of activity. In the first place, there is the academic who did his PhD in social psychiatry on mental disorders among North African migrant workers in France. After listening to individual stories of alienation, emotional deprivation, loss of identity, he let his patients speak out in an essay, *La plus haute des solitudes* ('The highest of solitudes', 1977), which had a great impact on public consciousness. He has mainly lived in Paris for the past eighteen years, and is well-known for his regular column in the daily, *Le Monde*.

Yet Tahar Ben Jelloun has another voice, a deeply Moroccan voice, that of a poet. Arrested at a time of student unrest, the experience of detention created in him the urge to write his first poems in 1966, which led to a regular contribution to the Moroccan literary magazine, *Souffles*. In a similar way, the experience narrated as a document in *La plus haute des solitudes* gave rise in 1973 to a parallel volume, *La réclusion solitaire* ('Solitary confinement'), here translated as *Solitaire*. The book is very short, more of a prose poem than direct social comment. It gives voice to a nameless figure, that of the exile who is utterly dispossessed by the conditions of his daily life. His mental space is a trunk, both a shelter and a prison, in which a few photographs and personal objects are all that link him to his origins. We hear some of his dialogues with other workers—other solitudes—or with indifferent strangers. Outside, the world is violence: in Lebanon, Palestine, in the Paris streets—unsafe at times for anyone who is a shade too dark-skinned. Inside the trunk is the world of dreams. The voice converses with the dream voice of a woman, Gazelle—wife or daughter, who knows? The contrast is total between the physical and sexual solitude of the man—the cold encounters with cheap prostitutes, the hostel room, the anonymous café—and the warmth and reality of his dream life, rich with the smell and touch of the remembered home.

The novel explores the limits of this solitude, so absolute that the very self dissolves, 'the head crumbles as if made of sand'. It is on one level a dramatic presentation of the predicament of isolated migrant workers, particularly relevant at the time of publication, when most Algerian men in France were separated from their families. But *Solitaire* is also the first in a series of fictional works centred on characters who are excluded or dispossessed—women, outsiders, migrants—as a way to underline the workings of a society and the mystery of identity.

This dense, singular book deserves reading, both as an indictment of man's callous exploitation of man, and as a fascinating exploration of the theme of solitude: 'my body begs for the touch of an eye, for the touch of a hand'. It is a pity that the translation does not always measure up to the poetic density of the original, but has a tendency to omit complex passages, key words or images, to trivialise the voice and overemphasise the social aspect: the impact in the original derives from the contrast between the sordid daily life represented and the sober dignity of the classical French of the narrative and dream life.

Several novels followed this short novel, among them *Moha le fou, Moha le sage* (1978), about the figure of the wise fool of popular oral tradition. It is fitting that the very successful *L'enfant de sable* ('The Sand Child', 1985) should be translated next, as it gained Tahar Ben Jelloun a wide audience, and paved the way for the prize given to its sequel, *La nuit sacrée*. *The Sand Child* is first of all a splendid tale, a rich yarn for anyone who wants to indulge freely in fantastic dreams. It is built on the theme of the androgyne, well-known to many traditions, but with far more magic in it than in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) or Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair* (1979). It begins, like a tale from *The Arabian Nights*, with a father who is disconsolate because he has seven daughters. In the secrecy of his household, in an ancient Moroccan city, he decides that the next child shall be a son, regardless. A girl is born, a conspiracy of silence between mother, father and midwife is established, and she is introduced to the world as Ahmed. He/she is brought up as a boy, becomes the heir and the remote ruler of the household over his (her) sisters, and eventually chooses for himself (herself) the fate designed by his (her) father. But here any summary must stop, because such an oblique, uncertain tale will not be summarised.

In some ways, it hardly reads like a novel, being invaded and given shape by several story-tellers—six in all—with diverging versions of Ahmed/Zahra's fate, 'The Woman with the Badly Shaven Beard', or 'The Man with a Woman's Breasts'. The story, 'painful and artificial', is compared to the old city itself, with its labyrinths, its circular streets, its doors that open onto other doors, or onto nothing, with the appeal of the desert beyond. Does he/she marry? Does Ahmed end up reduced to abstraction in a chosen 'solitary confinement' in the top room of his house, in the company of Islamic love poetry of past centuries? 'So many books have been written about bodies, pleasures, perfumes, tenderness, the sweetness of love between man and woman in Islam—ancient books that nobody reads nowadays.' Does Zahra end up exploited and brutalised in a circus?

The tale opens many doors to dreams and vision. Like *Solitaire*, it can be read on several levels. The most obvious one is as a captivating yarn, timeless and modern, with many strange characters, and the vivid background of the town, with its traditional market place gradually being taken over by *Club Méditerranée* activities. On another level, Tahar Ben Jelloun, like other writers from Islamic cultures, such as Nuruddin Farah for instance, describes his society from the restricted position of a woman, as a way of exposing the imbalances and tensions in a culture that 'negates bodies', estranges women from men. Like many other writers, he is fascinated by the imaginary impersonation of a woman's physical and emotional life, exploring fringes and ambiguities, the man in woman and the woman in man.

Desire is ever present, but connected also with language: 'My body was this page and this book.' It is clear that the ambivalence of the central character, his/her dual voice, expresses the pain and richness of the double identity of the exile, that of his Moroccan roots and his Western self: '... I had ended up imprisoned in this room with a character or rather, a riddle, two faces of the same being completely entrapped in an unfinished story, a story of ambiguity and flight!' A similar quest for 'one voice' to speak or write in, shapes all, for example, of Salman Rushdie's fiction; Ahmed asks repeatedly, 'Father, tell me who I am? Who am I, who is the other?' It is significant that both writers quote sufi mystic poets seeking 'the One', or show protagonists trapped

in a solitude which is an endless succession of mirror images: 'I live on both sides of the mirror', writes Ahmed/Zahra, 'myself against myself in the eternal return of an impossible passion.'

In this quest for a unified vision, *The Sand Child* evokes the comforting figure of a blind poet very similar to Jorge Luis Borges, who seems to bring solace to the dreams. The Latin American writer is the man who can best connect modernity and the long tradition of storytelling. Even more precisely, he connects Islam and European thought, appearing in nostalgic dreams of a happy Andalusia, in the garden of the Al Hambra. As 'The Blind Troubadour', he is the guide to the necessary poetic vision: 'All my life I had contrasted the power of words with the strength of the real and imaginary, visible and hidden world.'

The Sand Child is rich in meanings which are never closed. Like poems and tales, it is a source of direct pleasure with its images from North Africa and its oniric freedom, and like good tales it is a source of meditation. The poetic coherence, as in *Solitaire*, makes for a reading experience which is both estranging and illuminating. It is like the coin it refers to, with two faces, *battène* and *zahir*, an explicit and a deeper meaning. The translation is most of the time faithful to this richness and gives a good equivalent of the rhythm and tone of the French. It is a major novel, completely anchored in Tahar Ben Jelloun's deep culture, yet never provincial, dialoguing with Latin American fiction as well as with early Islamic poetry. It is to be hoped that the sequel, *La nuit sacrée* will soon recreate in English the mysterious beauty of the story of Ahmed/Zahra.

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African conditions

The Antipeople

Sony Labou Tansi

Translated from the French by J A Underwood

London/New York: Marion Boyars. 1988. 170pp. £10.95hb

Woman of the Aeroplanes

Kojo Laing

London: William Heinemann. 1988. 196pp. £12.95hb

Prisoners of Jebi

Ken Saro-Wiwa

Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Saros International. 1988. 180pp. £10.95hb

In his novel, *The Antipeople* (first published in French in 1983), Sony Labou Tansi takes as his subject the proposition that the condition of life is degradation and defeat.

The events the novel explores take place mainly in Zaire, in the post-colonial city people still call Leopoldville, 'to tease one another'. Its protagonist is Nitu Dadou, Citizen Principal of the North Lemba Teacher-Training College for Girls. When we first meet him, Dadou is in a kind of clover. He is respected for his professional status and his integrity, is the envied possessor of a government car with chauffeur (although both chauffeur and car are more often than not unavailable to him), and he is tortured only by the beautiful bodies of his students, which inflame him to passions of self-denial. Despite his good fortune (he has also been made a Commander of the Order of the Leopard and in his youth had been a national footballing star) Dadou is painfully aware of the precarious nature of his position, and that events are ordered more by patronage and self-interest than by any other consideration. Even as he 'innocently' lives off his good fortune, he is constantly assailed by nausea and self-dislike. The most common word on his lips is 'putrid', an expression of his unavoidable disgust.

One of his students, Yavelde, the beautiful niece of the area commissar, develops an obsession for him. Dadou fights off her invitations and demands, refusing to fall in love with 'a kid', 'a loony of the younger generation'. He underestimates Yavelde's passion, and, as he strives to repel her advances, Dadou's difficulties continue to mount. At a party of notables, he makes a fool of himself, drinking too much and vomiting over the beautiful people, another expression of his disgust. The director of the education department threatens to sack him from his position. Yavelde's sister, Yealdara, who is a sociology graduate (and also beautiful), falls in love with Dadou too. It is all much more than Dadou can cope with, and he takes to drink with complete abandon.

Through his liquid vision, the events around him hardly penetrate his consciousness, until he finds himself thrown into prison. Yavelde had killed herself, and left a letter claiming that she was pregnant with Dadou's child, whereupon the police arrested Dadou for murder. The area commissar, Yavelde's uncle, swore that Dadou would never come out of jail. A mob attacks Dadou's house, and kills his wife and two children by burning them to death. The mob hangs around afterwards, like a rustic chorus, discussing its handiwork and planning a fine fate for the absent Dadou. Tansi portrays here the capacity of human beings to inflict casual brutalities, and chillingly depicts the cynical cruelty of a community that has been forced to live without law.

Strangely, though not at all unpredictably given the argument of this novel, it is while he is in prison that Dadou meets the only two people in Zaire who are selflessly kind to him, a fellow prisoner Falodiati, and the prison governor. It is the prison governor who arranges Dadou's escape, an irresistible irony, and Yealdara who procures papers for him and helps him to leave the city. The river crossing turns out to be a descent into another frightening underworld. (The book's dust-jacket describes this country across the river as Angola, but all the indications suggest the Congo Republic.) The 'other side' has a metaphorical dimension. Here live all those who have run away, people without hope, the Antipeople: 'as if all the ordinary people, all the people who have suffered, all the people who have lost out in life, have to come here.'

As Tansi's novel slouches towards its horrifying denouement, it leaves behind it the slaughter of all human decencies. Beatings and torture are unavoidable, desire and lust find expression in mutilations and rape, and it is the innocent that the Security seeks out most of all to kill. Even God is no longer at hand: 'Things here have got beyond God. This is a heavy world. A heavy time.' The only thing left to hope for is the end, but even that is denied the dwellers of this dark world. As Old Assabrous tells Yealdara

when she tries to comfort herself with this miserable crumb: 'There is no end.' *The Antipeople* is a powerful and shocking novel, written in a tone of lugubrious and disgusted humour. Through it, the dereliction and squalor of a modern African dictatorship is revealed with bitter intensity.

Woman of the Aeroplanes, Kojo Laing's second novel,* is an altogether different experience from *The Antipeople*. Tansi takes as his central metaphor the degradation of human society, and the failure of modern Africa to conduct its affairs with decency. Kojo Laing's novel eschews such a direct confrontation with the political. *Woman of the Aeroplanes* energetically cuts out an original path of its own. Its language and allusions are unexpected, challenging and reinscribing images and ideas. A character is described like this, for example: 'Fatima was as tall as sixty-six of Moro's different-coloured cola piled up sensibly.' The novel aspires to a poetic prose, giving room to words and sounds to generate their connections. Above all, it bristles with good humour, and has at its heart an optimism, and an enjoyment of its dozens of characters.

The novel tells the story of the people of Tukwan, a town of ninety-nine houses which is not far from Kumasi, in Ghana, but which is invisible to the rest of the country. The inhabitants of the town are immortal; when they die they are reborn as themselves, as are the goats, the elephants—some of which are blue—and the ducks. The people of Tukwan have no choice but to invent. Paradoxically, though, the more they invent the more they jeopardise their immortality.

The 'woman of the aeroplanes' is Pokuua, who purchases two aeroplanes with which selected townspeople will make a trip to Levensvale, a town in Scotland, whose people are also immortal. There is intense competition for places on the aeroplanes, and the inhabitants of Tukwan reveal themselves at their surrealistic best in these sections. The meeting between Tukwan and Levensvale occurs by inspired magic, but after it, shocking cycles of mortality begin to arise, and a poor woman dies 'without resurrection'. The novel records and reveals the complex interconnections in the corresponding people of the two towns, showing them to be real and profound.

Laing works hard to avoid making his unusual tale into 'a curiosity rather than something vital and organic'. He avoids the cliché oppositions which his subject invites, and his images have a freshness and energy which is unique. The abundance of virtuoso twists and turns, however, works against the novel's purpose in the end. Laing takes so many liberties with language, tossing out his strange pictures at bewildering speed, that his narrative becomes introspective and, at times, impenetrably self-referential. Through it all, though, the novel's energy and inventiveness are plain.

Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Prisoners of Jebi* is a collection of fifty-three pieces which the author wrote for the Nigerian newspaper, *Vanguard*, and which were published in a weekly column from January 1986 to January 1987. They are structurally linked by their thematic focus, which is satiric, and by the unifying device of the location of the dramas themselves. The book describes itself (on its dust-jacket) as 'Africa's first novel-in-progress', whatever that may be. It reads very much like a collection of episodic pieces on a theme.

Jebi Prison was built as a result of an initiative by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to increase understanding among Africans, all other methods having failed.

* B Kojo Laing's first novel, *Search Sweet Country* (1986) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10(2) April 1988, pp 978-80.

Nigeria offered to build the prison on an artificial island in the Atlantic, both because no one else wanted to do it, and because it was an irresistible opportunity to squander more oil money. Indeed, in Saro-Wiwa's Nigeria, squandering money seems to be the only thing Nigerians can do with any competence. The first story concerns the events surrounding the setting up of the prison itself. The prison becomes a kind of microcosm of Nigerian society, a metaphorically closed world where the absurdities and improprieties of Nigerian public life are writ large.

The characters, therefore, represent a fairly narrow range of the human community. They are all inmates of the prison, some guilty, mostly innocent. The prison director is the central figure in most of the episodes, and his naivety is often the reference point of the particular skulduggery being exposed. The aim of the stories is essentially to satirise the materialism, inefficiency and greed of oil-booming Nigeria. There are other themes which are closely linked to this one, and which are really aspects of the same argument: corruption, inefficiency, philistinism. The satire has a fine cutting edge to it, and the humour works well. Saro-Wiwa's portrayal of the rapacity and incompetence of businessmen, lawyers and rulers, both military and civilian, is ferocious and sarcastic. He repeatedly returns to 'the disappearing millions', the sacking of Nigeria's national treasury, and the wanton squandering of possibilities represented by that profligacy. Saro-Wiwa names names, and does not target his wit solely against Nigerian leaders. General Doe of Liberia and Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone, among many others, are frequently subjected to similar treatment.

Despite the force of its satire, there is a degree of monotony about the episodes in *Prisoners of Jebs*. The same themes are rehearsed in variation. New characters are sent to prison at regular intervals, to introduce a different topic and modify the perspective. None of these measures is enough to keep the book vibrant to the end.

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Enriching the landscape

Paraja

Gopinath Mohanty

Translated from the Oriya by Bikram K Das

London: Faber & Faber. 1988. 373pp. £12.95hb

English August: an Indian story

Upamanyu Chatterjee

London: Faber & Faber. 1988. 291pp. £11.95hb

* Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel, *Memory of Departure* (1987) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10(1) January 1988, pp 326-30.

The Memory of Elephants

Boman Desai

London: André Deutsch. 1988. 328pp. £11.95hb

In the 1950s, after India's independence, it was fashionable to predict the inevitable decline of Indian writing in English. Could writers continue to find the verve, the imagination and the reference point for self-expression in the language of the coloniser? Furthermore, could writers dare to prise the novel out of the conventional nineteenth-century framework and experiment with structure and style? Such discussions rightly demanded the enrichment of national and international literary landscapes through a dynamic translation of literature from Indian languages, whose diversity and complexity would challenge even the rich resources of English.

While progress in the area of translation has been slow and often disheartening, the Indian novel in English has established itself on the world stage. Some of the writers are not based in India, but their cosmopolitan experience leads to exploration of heritage, religion and cultural translation in migrant lives. Leading the expatriates is Salman Rushdie, who has been followed by a rush of talent from what may be called a third generation of writers, the most gifted of whom are Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh—both still based in India, though having had long stretches of student life in Europe and the USA—and Bharati Mukherjee, whose stories reveal the idea of the USA as it transforms arrivals from Asia and Latin America. In India, with R K Narayan as doyen, the novel in English has been enhanced by many talents including Anita Desai, once called the novelist of the inner life, who has moved with courage towards new frontiers, and Shashi Deshpande, who has sufficient command of her tradition to disprove the assumption that the English language is incapable of expressing any Indian world other than a cosmopolitan one. It is against this background* that the three novels under review need to be read.

Dr Gopinath Mohanty, well known in India as a versatile writer of plays, novels, short stories and critical essays, was awarded the prestigious Jnanpith Prize in 1974. *Paraja*, a novel about tribal life and the cycle of existence, was first published forty-four years ago; yet it is chillingly contemporary, and the lilting lyricism of Bikram K Das' fine, sensitive translation suggests much of the power of the writer's original Oriya cadences. Like his near contemporary, the Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi, who explores the evil of bonded labour, Dr Mohanty has a passionate social awareness. He has spent a lifetime trying to understand the disruptive impact of a materialistic civilisation, and of so-called progress, on a primordial and elemental way of life. His novel discloses a continuing process which, to paraphrase Fanon, did not end when the last white policeman left and the last European flag came down.

Mohanty's major novels are at heart an indictment of social oppression and abuse. They are redeemed by the values of the oppressed, whose endeavours to survive are

* For reviews of these authors in *Third World Quarterly*, see *TWQ* 11 (2) April 1989, pp 167-9, for a review by Anita Desai of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988); *TWQ* 11 (2) April 1989, pp 169-75 for Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* (1987) and *The Middleman and other stories* (1988), and Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988); *TWQ* 11 (1) January 1989, pp 167-8, for Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988); and *TWQ* 9 (4) October 1987, pp 1402-5 for R K Narayan's *Talkative Man* (1986).

identified with the vision of the artist in a shared integrity. A poetic narrative style lays bare the ideology implicit in debates that represent as 'primitive' or less developed, societies on the periphery of the mainstream. Here the divide takes the form of representatives of government who police the forests and prey on unsuspecting tribals, not least the women whom they corrupt; in their wake follows the contractor with 'his bag of money', luring the tribal farmer to construction work with the promise of good wages. The tribal breaks his code and is doomed:

Sukru Jani lay tossing on his straw bed all night, smoking his cheroots endlessly. A Paraja may work for his neighbour occasionally, and get rewarded for it, but he never sells his labour for wages. He felt betrayed by his daughters, and thoroughly confused. All his experience was confined to the land: he knew how to plough, dam a stream, clear a jungle; for what was happening now, he was simply not equipped.

The novel takes its name from the Paraja tribe which has its home among the mountains and forests of Koraput in Orissa. There, the intrusion of technology and socialisation by various elements including Christianisation may arguably have created a better quality of life. One undeniable effect, however, has been the destruction of tribal cohesiveness and an irreversible disintegration of values. Mohanty does not presume to judge, but reveals in poignant detail the intractable processes of life. He presents compromise, devious methods and material incitement as entering the scene usually via characters with Christian names. While it is true that Christianity did destroy the totem, to make the Christian the main intermediary between the system of exploitation and the victim is, at best, to evade the issue.

Sukru Jani, whose odyssey the novel recounts, is a free man in the first quarter of the tale—a period of joyous celebration of owning a patch all his own, and four children to share the burden of eking out a living; then comes bondage and the end of all hope. He knows nothing of contemporary environmental concerns and cannot understand why the government agent makes the felling of trees a crime. He does comprehend, however, the death of his wife who was dragged away by a man-eating tiger as she collected dry twigs in the forest. This is the reality of his life. The other fundamental presence is land: 'he had not forgotten the dignity of the Paraja peasant working on his own land. Circumstances had bowed him down, but not broken him.' The narrative delineates character through the ritual of the day-to-day, lived with passionate abandon whether in gaiety, hard work or despair. The rhythm of cyclic association, though repetitive, expresses deep tribal loyalties and powerfully evokes the rites of sowing and harvesting, and the natural sensuality of celebration, song and laughter. Although a disturbingly pessimistic novel, *Paraja* is life-affirming, and its tragic sense sustains transient joys and songs of innocence. Mohanty's prose elevates social, anthropological and moral concerns to a metaphysical quest: the life of Sukru Jani and his family represents the plight of mankind. This translation of a novel, where the storyteller's art, psychological insight and philosophical depth combine with incomparable power, whets the appetite for more.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August* is a first novel set in the small provincial town of Madna. Its ribald mirth and irrepressible sense of the absurd derive wholly from the fact that the novelist, whose intellect and sensibility have been nurtured on Anglicised, urban, cosmopolitan influences, finds himself trying to make sense of the vagaries of mofussil life. The rural world rests uneasily beside Mohanty's cosmos, and yet it indisputably represents an Indian way of life. Such complexities illustrate the

clash of pristine cultures in their encounter with a nation pushing its way towards technological frontiers. Hence the importance of reading Indian literatures in translation as much as in English, in order to appreciate the diverse flavour of Indian society.

Chatterjee's narrator, Agastya Sen, a young civil servant (known to his freewheeling college mates as August, and to his family as Ogu), speaks an astonishing mix of English, Urdu and American, the staple of campus life: 'Hazaar fucked . . . really fucked. I'm sure nowhere else could languages be mixed *and* spoken with such ease', in an accent 'unique in its fucked mongrelness'. If Rushdie owes a debt to G D Desani's *All About H Hatterr* (1949) for a mental process that attempts to recover the self as it comes to terms with the cultural history of the subcontinent, Chatterjee has created in Sen a worthy successor to the Hindustani Hatterr himself; both characters strive to make sense of the tangle of bureaucratised. The son of a Bengali father and Goan mother, he echoes the chaotic divisions of Hatterr's parentage.

On one level, the picaresque tale satirises Indians who speak English more fluently than they do any Indian language. They are branded 'the English type' who, like Sen, are left anchorless and battling against a sense of waste when compelled in their adult professional lives to comprehend a reality outside 'shallow, secure, urban' childhood. The narrative interrupts incidents of great hilarity with occasional reflection:

The people who waited for Government to be kind to them, in white dhoti, kurta and napkin. On the right beyond the station yard, the town crawling all over the ruins of the eighteenth-century fort of the obscure tribal king who had given Madna its name. The whole seemed to have been bypassed by all that had made history and news, had remained impervious to the Mughals and 1857 and Bande Mataram and the mid-century travails of megapolitan India. In the distance, cutting off the inch-line of forest, the futuristic structure of the new thermal power station, steel threatening the sky, beside the shrunken river, waiting for rain to flood the district and remind its people of the horrors that customarily lay beyond the orbit of their lives.

One of the characters, when in a state of inebriated vision, is made to comment on writers who live abroad and write about India:

'I find these people absurd, full of one mixed up culture and writing about another, what kind of audience are they aiming at. That's why their India is just not real, a place of fantasy, or of confused metaphysics, a sub continent of goons. All their Indians are caricatures . . . Because there are really no universal stories, because each language is an entire culture . . . And this place is a continent, far too heterogenous. Great literature has to have its regional tang—a great Tamil story, for instance, whose real greatness would be *ultimately* obscure to any non-Tamilian'

There can no longer be much doubt, however, that an Indian heritage can be the basis for creative art elsewhere; the last decade has enough illustrious examples. Boman Desai's *The Memory of Elephants* is one such expatriate novel. Though gawky and rambling, it cannot be lightly dismissed, for it illuminates a fascinating kaleidoscope of collective and family history. Homi Seervai, a young Parsee scientist living in the USA, invents a memory machine which he finds himself trapped in, and plunges into 'the collective unconscious . . . the record of the universe . . . adjunct of individual memory'. With this narrative strategy the novel unfolds a wide range of events, starting with the

advent of the Parsees in India, who were welcomed by tolerant Hindus when they fled from their Arab conquerors in Iran. The strengths and eccentricities of the Parsees are revealed through a rich range of characters of whom Bapaiji, the paternal grandmother, is the most fully realised.

MARIA COUTO*

London

Fool for love?

Three Continents

Ruth Praver Jhabvala

London: Penguin. 1988. 384pp. £4.99pb

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's tenth novel returns to India after the US excursion of *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), but to the India of the International Theme. In its tripartite structure (the USA, Britain, India) the novel recalls its predecessors in Henry James' novels, as New World idealism meets Old World sophistication, and Easternised Westerner succumbs to the Westernised East.

Harriet Wishwell, the scion of an extremely wealthy, if now declining, American clan, stands to inherit vast amounts of property on her twenty-first birthday, sharing her inheritance with her twin, Michael. When the pair fall under the spell of the mysterious Rawul, one of Jhabvala's ambivalent guru figures, the horrible possibility looms that their legacy will pass swiftly through his hands and into the grasping paws of his second-in-command, Crishi, Harriet's husband, whose sexual favours she appears to share both with homosexual Michael, and with the Rawul's mistress, Rani. The stage is thus set for a sinister clash between reason and passion, the material and the spiritual, as the novel moves towards the fatal date when Harriet will have full disposal of her estate.

Jhabvala has come a very long way indeed from the light ironies of her comic period, recalling Jane Austen. In *Three Continents* it is rather as if an unenlightened Emma had married her Mr Knightley only to find herself in the clutches of a dissolute rake who was only after her money. Much of the tragic irony of the novel depends upon Harriet's blindness, which may or may not be wilful. Thus, it is never entirely clear whether Harriet is primarily attracted to the guru's movement on idealistic grounds, or whether the attraction lies closer to home, in her hungry need for love at any price. Unusually, the Rawul's programme aims less at the spiritual plane than at transcending political and racial boundaries on earth in order to establish a universal realm of peace. Indeed, given the Indian context, the Western opposition of spirit to flesh may be irrelevant. Certainly, Crishi is as trickily sensual and as difficult to pin down as his namesake, Krishna. For all their flaws, Harriet sees Crishi and his family as an in-

* Maria Couto's study, *Graham Greene: on the frontier: politics and religion in the novels* (1988) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10 (4) October 1988, pp 1640-41.

tegral part of the Rawul's movement, their presence giving body to his ideas much as a pantheon of gods may incarnate a set of virtues. For Harriet it matters little if the gods misbehave (Venus eloping with Mars, Krishna deceiving Radha); they still remain gods.

Jhabvala's view of this separation of the ethical from the religious sphere may be deduced from one of her finest comic sequences, the ceremonial weighing of the Rawul against a pile of books representing the accumulated wisdom of the ages. As a result of Crishi's economics the stout Rawul is uneasily counterbalanced by a somewhat tattered assortment of secondhand copies of the Bible, Plato, the Koran, Carlos Castaneda and the Dhammapada, only eventually lifting into the air when Kierkegaard is added to the pile - a nice irony! Myth clearly figures only as mystification, both in the novel and in the Rawul's movement, which becomes a cover for an international smuggling ring, trading in drugs and *objets d'art*. Both East and West are the targets for pitiless satire, with fools and knaves predominating in the USA, India and Britain. Whether Harriet finally proves a fool for love, or a knave in iniquity is complicated by the nature of the narration, presented retrospectively from some future point in time, and relayed entirely through Harriet.

If the Rawul is judged in the philosophical and literary balance and found wanting, Harriet is rather too much of a blank page on which nobody has ever written, totally susceptible to the scripts of others. In her stunned passivity she recalls the similarly deadpan narrator of *Heat and Dust* (1975), and is just as provoking to the reader. Jhabvala often employs a buried melodramatic plot beneath a cooler surface story (as in the Nawab's affair with Olivia in *Heat and Dust*, with its 'Sheikh of Araby' overtones) in order to establish through a structural device a counterpoint of reason and passion. Throughout *Three Continents* the reader is afforded glimpses of a threatening situation with recurrent dark hints (sporadic violence, a disciple in jail in Turkey, half-heard conversations in the wings) which create an atmosphere of sustained menace. As a result, the reader spends much of the novel in an escalating state of anxiety and exasperation, inwardly crying 'Look behind you!' in the best melodramatic tradition as the villains creep up on the oblivious Harriet, while also wondering just how much Harriet is herself deliberately concealing.

Harriet's detachment is such as to make her almost a voyeur, watching her own story unfold and guessing its outcome from the same hints available to the reader. The closeness between reader and ostensible narrator is indicated when Crishi justifies a melodramatic account of his own youth on the grounds that movements need colourful stories: 'It's what the common reader wants . . . Harriet liked it and she's a very common reader.' Jhabvala's readers are therefore brought into close emotional proximity to events, while simultaneously being warned off any uncritical collusion. The result is a deeply disquieting novel, which provides a subtle dramatisation of the psychopathology of power, the anxieties of influence, the relation of disciples to leaders, and the inadequacy of the rational once the senses are given free rein.

JUDIE NEWMAN

University of Newcastle Upon Tyne

Catalysts of change

Baotown

Wang Anyi

Translated from the Chinese by Martha Avery

London: Viking. 1989. 136pp. £11.95hb

The Flow

Wang Anyi:

Translated from the Chinese

London: Facsimili Publications. 1989. 150 pp. £4.95pb

The villager sees his village as the centre of the world, his experience as typical of human experience. As the novelist and critic, John Berger, observes in his essay, 'The Storyteller', this is more a question of phenomenological reality than of parochialism. The village as microcosm: the subject has fascinated the stalwarts of magical realism and regionalism alike, from Gabriel García Márquez and R K Narayan to Eudora Welty and Berger himself. In contemporary China the village saga or history holds a position of particular privilege: in its agrarian mode, peopled by the peasant heroes of socialist realism, it was for many years after 1949 prescribed literary fare. In *Baotown* (1984), one of the finest Chinese novels of the last decade to appear in translation, Wang Anyi reappropriates the genre, stripping it of propaganda and ideology to present a moving chronicle, part-realistic, part-fable, of rural Chinese lives in the two decades before, and the years immediately after, the death of Mao Zedong.

Born in 1954, Wang is a prominent member of a restless, self-consciously experimental generation of writers engaged in undoing the more restrictive tropes of contemporary Chinese fiction.

Her work is as removed from conventional realism as it is from Marquezian fantasy, though *Baotown* begins with the legend of its creation in the remote past. In terse, impressionistic fragments, Wang unfolds the story of her village and its inhabitants, peasants with small landholdings in a region constantly menaced by floods, famine and poverty. Nature rather than political change (national events rarely intrude) is the real enemy. The lives of the rural poor are deeply rooted in the ancient rituals and superstitions of the Yellow River; Wang is particularly good at evoking with wry humour the grudging goodness and solidarity of small communities. But *Baotown* is hardly a sentimental novel. Much of its raw power derives from its depiction of village conservatism, to which the indigent landless and the incoming refugees from hunger fall victim in their encounters with their hosts.

Images of vagrancy, destitution and starvation haunt the best sections of the novel. The roving peddler, Picked-up, the foster-son of a single woman, finds a home in the bed of a Baotown widow and a respite from vagrancy tilling her land; subjected to physical violence by the widow's enraged in-laws, he nearly flees the village. The singing beggar, Little Jade, accepted as a child-bride by another Bao family, falls in love with her husband's younger brother and escapes in order to keep faith.

Wang's exceptional strength as a radical storyteller lies in her ability to underwrite the narrative with a knowledge of the twin necessities that dictate the lives of her protagonists: economic and emotional need. Her prose is spare and clean, almost entirely devoid of descriptive adornment. Linking the chapters are the chants and refrains of the old ballad singer, BaoBingdi, who in a few short, sharp lines sings the symbolic histories of three Chinese millennia. In the same way, Wang conveys, with a miniaturist's skill, the sexual longings of the widow, the yearning of the peddler for his lost home and mother; a field, a landscape, a brute physical sensation, a fleeting emotion. Even more evident are Wang's years as a musician. The composition of *Baotown* with its asymmetrical sequences, its pauses, ellipses, gaps and silences, is aleatory and musical, suggestive rather than explicit in its broken images, its tropisms of longing.

The apparently random technique of much of *Baotown*, with its diffuse and meandering method of narration and its plethora of textual devices (including legends, excerpts from ballads, cryptograms presenting the march and peripheral impingement of history, memories, radio broadcasts and weather reports) gradually coheres when the parallel narratives converge at the parabolic climax. A flood takes away the lives of three central characters, creating a new myth of heroism and noble self-sacrifice for the village. Inextricable links, hitherto concealed by the novelist's technical obliquity, now emerge in the personal destinies of Baotown's inhabitants. Another dimension of meaning is revealed; *Baotown* can be read as a parable of sacrifice, with its quasi-Buddhist, fatalistic understanding of the ironic cycles of existence: the wheel of life and death.

Yet here, the major flaw of the novel's structure is uncovered. The climactic sequence occurs too early, and in her effort to retain narrative unities and control without losing the story's parabolic dimension, Wang introduces a rather shrill note of satire that almost overwhelms the last section of *Baotown*. Lampooning the propaganda machine that turns real tragedy into socialist realism in the person of the village's hack writer, the tone of these chapters is reminiscent of the post-Cultural Revolution stories of Wang's older contemporaries, and contrasts oddly with her real concerns: reconciliation, redemption, the cycle of birth, sickness, age, death and symbolic resurrection. Though Wang's critique of socialist realism occasionally amuses, her reworking of the form is far more impressive. Never portentous, never sentimental, Wang's vision of a world of poverty and need in which hunger and desire are close allies has a piercing truth all the more compelling because it always embraces the economic necessities that drive men and women towards each other. Wang has spoken of her fascination with women's lives, their power and perseverance, and her portrayals of women are particularly powerful. These women, who remain true to their relationships but above all to themselves, are a source of inspiration, and the real catalysts of change: the aunt who brings up a child only to send him out to look for his fortune and for love elsewhere when his confused, adolescent desire engulfs their shared life, the madwoman who drowns herself to free her husband for another wife, the child-bride who fights for, and eventually wins, the man she really loves, against village convention; these women remake their lives and their men in new moulds, in the service of a better world.

In *Baotown*, Wang's feminism is relegated to subtext, one bright strand in a tapestry of many colours. The narrative space is equally divided between male and female characters; there is no single perspective, only the voice of the entire village. However, in her early novella, *The Flow*, the central consciousness is that of a woman. The plot is

imple: Wang presents, with painstaking attention to subjective detail, the life, fortunes and choices of her middle-class, middle-aged protagonist over a span of some fifteen years. An ordinary housewife, Duanli accepts a series of unskilled jobs in order to feed her large family, who have been forced to give up their relatively privileged lives during the Cultural Revolution.

On one level, *The Flow* can be read as a catalogue of the bleak quotidian minutiae of a woman's life during the Cultural Revolution, and her response to the drastically shifting attitudes of the following years. On another level, it gives a sociological presentation of the effects of political change on three generations of a family. A more rewarding reading of the novel is to locate it in the context of contemporary Chinese women's writing, a particularly strong trend revived to great effect in the 1980s by important writers such as Zhang Jie, Shen Rong and Wang's mother, Ru Zhijuan. *The Flow* is not one of Wang's best works; in comparison with the satirical onslaughts of Shen and Zhang, her muted, compassionate approach may appear insipid. But these writers are united in their common project: to hold up critical mirrors to the double moral standards and the disparities that govern Chinese women's lives. Wang's restrained handling of issues and emotional situations often exceeds the insights of her contemporaries. Her examinations of relationships between the sexes, generations and classes are moving and perceptive, though there is little evidence here of the agility of her prose and the bitter levity of her fictional technique. In *The Flow*, her method is expository rather than analytical, relying on her protagonist's reflections and on dialogue fraught with ambiguities to illustrate the ambivalent attitudes of her characters. Gradually building up to a controlled critique of the materialistic social values and rampant consumerism of the present generation, she depicts, with great economy, a network of relationships that serves as a microcosm of Shanghai's society.

The noted Chinese-American writer, Maxine Hong Kingston, observed on a recent visit to China that whereas US women continue to concentrate on intensely personal and autobiographical issues in their writing, Chinese women write about the same more broadly social and political issues as their male contemporaries. Wang, who maps both territories with equal skill, has nevertheless spoken of her more profound interest in individual lives and her belief in the moral superiority of women.

The Flow is the honest account of a woman's search: for her ideals, for her place in the world and for an authentic mode of being. Like her contemporaries, Wang deftly links the personal and the political in the title's allusion to the flow and impact of time: 'It always left something behind. Always.' She refers to the existential lessons learnt by the heroine and recognised with hindsight: stoicism, solidarity, respect for labour, austerity. In view of recent developments in China and calls for new measures of austerity, Wang's insights may prove prophetic.

AMER HUSSEIN

London

Stronger than truth

The Perón Novel

Tomás Eloy Martínez

Translated from the Spanish by Asa Zatz

New York: Pantheon Books. 1988. 357pp. \$19.95hb

The Devil's Trill

Daniel Moyano

Translated from the Spanish by Giovanni Pontiero

London: Serpent's Tail. 1988. 119pp. £6.50pb

Open Door

Luisa Valenzuela

Various translators from the Spanish

Berkeley, California: North Point Press. 1988. 202pp. \$12.95pb

The controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), has illustrated in an alarming fashion how difficult some people find it to separate literal from literary truth. The relation of external reality, and its use for political or religious ends, to the fiction of reality as imaginatively portrayed within a book has rarely been more disturbingly questioned in recent times.

This interpenetration of reality, and fictional writing about reality, seems to have come as a genuine surprise to writers in Britain and Western Europe, who may be accustomed to controversy about the size of advance cheques, but rarely find what they write eliciting much of a response outside literary circles. The ability to shock, and thus become not only a commentary on events but also part of those events as they unfold in real life, has now become, in the West, the prerogative of television, which commands a mass audience and a prestige now lost to the printed word.

In many parts of the world though, the propensity of writing to have direct political consequences comes as less of a surprise. For Argentine and other Latin American writers of this generation, the issue of the interaction of fiction with politics has been high on the agenda. Many have not only struggled with the questions thrown up by the political reality in which they are immersed, seeking both literary and political solutions, but have also suffered directly because of the way in which that reality has impinged on their work as writers. The three Argentine authors of the books under review, for example (all of them established writers in their forties or fifties), have had their lives as writers disrupted for political reasons: Eloy Martínez lived in exile for eight years after a bomb was planted at the offices of the newspaper for which he worked; Daniel Moyano was imprisoned by the military authorities after the 1976 coup, and since his release from prison has lived in exile in Spain; and Luisa Valenzuela has also found it impossible to live and work in Argentina since the mid-1970s.

At the same time, most Argentine writers have seen the attempt to explain the political reality of Argentina, dominated as it has been over the past decade by chaos and

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violence, as their main task. Gone are the days of a Jane Austen, who could write her novels of sensibility during the Napoleonic Wars without this once being mentioned as impinging on the lives of her characters. Argentine writers are fully immersed in reality, and are struggling hard to survive.

One of the chief challenges for writers engaged in this struggle has been the significance of Perónism, the mass political movement which has dominated Argentina for the past forty years. Eloy Martínez engages the figure of Perón and his myth directly, the title of the book, *The Perón Novel*, itself raising questions about where and how historical and fictional reality meet. The work is based around the moment in 1973 at which General Perón, in exile for eighteen years, is about to make his triumphal return to Argentina. For his followers, this was to be the moment of apotheosis, the moment that would redeem all the years of suffering and give them back a future of dreams. What (in reality) happened was a massacre of the left-wing revolutionaries who saw Perón as their leader, by the right-wing union thugs who claimed to be Perón's true supporters. This airport massacre was the tragic beginning of a spiral of violence that was to tear Argentine society apart for the next decade. In his ambitious and fascinating book, Martínez explores how a leader like Perón can come to represent two apparently mutually exclusive meanings, and how the leader himself becomes stripped of his own personal identity and meaning in order to satisfy the demands of others. Perón the person is sucked dry by Perón the leader, and even the autobiography he is trying to compose—intended to give history the true version of himself—is gradually taken over by his secretary-succubus, Lopez Rega; any attempt at a genuine exploration of the meaning of his life is swallowed up in the deliberate but fatuous creation of a myth.

An even grosser distortion of history lies at the heart of Daniel Moyano's entertaining novel, *The Devil's Trill*. We learn at the outset that the birthplace of the protagonist, Triclinio, was 'an error on the part of a group of Spanish army officers who misunderstood an order', which meant that they had to unfound the city they had just created. Hence, a crisis of identity is Triclinio's and Argentina's birthright, though it is a bitter paradox that such confusion also makes the place 'the land of eternal hope'. Thus robbed of any certain origins, Triclinio travels in hope from his native region—where he is unique for his violin playing but finds it impossible to earn a living—to Buenos Aires, where it seems everyone else is just as busy playing their own fiddle. As a *Candide* in the midst of turmoil and terrors, all he can cling to is this one assertion of his own identity, and this finally brings its reward when it is he who, as in the *Piper of Hamelin*, rids the city of its oppressors:

As more and more torturers appeared, it became increasingly difficult for him to draw sounds from his violin. The women encouraged him to press on, for they were relying on him to rid them of this plague. And the children who were old enough to have experienced tear-gas or the electric prod waved him on with small flags and handkerchiefs.

This optimism that the violin player/writer does have something to contribute for the good of others is what Luisa Valenzuela is desperately searching for in many of the stories in her selection, *Open Door*. Her earlier work, printed in the second half of the book, is concerned with the violence of desire, with magic and private heresies. As she herself relates in the book's preface, however, a return visit to Argentina in the mid-1970s radically changed both her view of life and her writing:

Buenos Aires belonged then to violence and to state terrorism, and I could only sit in cafés and

brood. Till I decided a book of short stories could be written in a month, at those same café tables, overhearing scraps of scared conversations, sleeping in the general paranoia. *Strange Things Happen Here* was born, and with it a new political awareness. And action.

The story, 'Strange Things Happen Here', is the clear turning-point of this book, too. From then on, the violence is situated outside individual desire, as something that threatens any attempt to construct meaning—individual, historical, or fictional. The bleak, more recent stories return obsessively to a search for elements to pit against annihilation, and like Moyano, the author here concludes that all she can do is to 'remake her island' with whatever scraps are at hand, hoping her messages will be received and deciphered.

All three authors bring the act of writing to the fore in their work. They are concerned with how fiction can make some kind of assertion that will not be blown away by the blind violence of political or religious dogmatism; in their contrasting ways they are equally determined that if indeed truth is stranger than fiction, then fiction must be stronger than truth.

NICK CAISTOR

London

Bearing witness

El Infierno

Carlos Martínez Moreno

Translated from the Spanish by Ann Wright

London: Readers International. 1988. 266pp. \$8.95/£4.95pb

Recent research into the military dictatorships of South America during the 1970s and 1980s suggests that they had a shared mission: to restructure civil society in such a way as to assist, and effectively *guarantee*, increased transnational capitalist penetration into the area. This meant not only ridding the political terrain of 'subversive elements' that were historically antagonistic to such processes, but also creating the space for functional (hegemonic) bourgeois rule.* They failed. Yet the cost of the attempt was enormous: countless thousands of murdered and 'disappeared' victims, and massive external debts inhibiting subsequent attempts at democratisation.

A further product of these dictatorial regimes was a profusion of documentation. As noted in *El Infierno*: 'they document everything, set up filing systems for the worst barbarism, for public and private infamy' (p 187). The surveillance and repressive activities entailed by the military ideology of National Security in Latin America (the 'Reason of State') required, like Nazism in Europe, the total administration of the social, as well as the transformation of national subjects into the objects of military logic: the barracks as utopia.

* A Rouquié and R Sidicardo, 'Etats autoritaires et libéralisme économique en Amérique Latine: une approche hétérodoxe', *Revue Tiers-Monde*, No. 93, 1983

The military's attempt to dominate South America's political space also failed. The resistance of popular, intellectual and human rights organisations is well known. Exile, by now a traditional place for Latin American authors to write from, also provided another space for resistance, and it was from there that the Uruguayan novelist, Carlos Martínez Moreno, wrote *El Infierno*.

El Infierno tells the macabre story of the above militarisation of Uruguayan politics, as the armed forces mobilised in pursuit of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN) guerrilla group, better known as the Tupamaros. The novel is organised into chapters which act as a series of 'takes', or episodes, tracing the story cumulatively. Moreover, the cultural materials from which it is made are precisely those documents bearing witness to the militarisation of Uruguayan society in the early 1970s, the documents recording that part of history which the state would have liked to have kept secret, but which popular and human rights organisations made public: 'dossiers, testimonies, reports . . . and rumour' (p 235). That Martínez Moreno was a lawyer comes as no surprise, since his fiction constitutes a way of practising law, or politics, by other means, reminding us of the classical roots of both law and poetics in the art of rhetoric.

The different episodes presented in the novel are given unity only insofar as they illustrate, almost like a series of case-studies, the escalation of military repression: 'the algebra of the reprisal' (p 237). In Uruguay the military were initially called in by the civilian government to combat the Tupamaros, but in 1973 seized power in a *coup d'état*. They then pursued their own brutal dirty war. In a couple of harrowing chapters Martínez Moreno shows how torture becomes a *culture*. Their central character, the Advisor, has come from the USA to Uruguay as part of a counter-insurgency AID programme to train 'underdeveloped' officers in the 'art' of torture:

'Torture, in the hands of the police officers, had always been a confused affair of kicks, punches . . . They flung themselves into it blindly . . . Sometimes, in the brutality of the attack, the prisoner died on them, so thwarting the whole object as he took with him the knowledge they wanted . . . but here is the AID advisor to help improve their techniques and their mental preparation. The advisor offers them a different perspective, and different methods, a way not to waste their efforts.' (pp 15-16)

He then 'experiments' on four down-and-outs who have been picked up so that the Advisor may illustrate his lesson. *El Infierno* (Hell) is a culture increasingly dominated by *instrumental reason* applied to the objectified body, and by the industrialisation of death (hence the parallels with Nazism).

In another episode (familiar to those who have seen Costa Gavras's film, *State of Siege*, 1973) the Advisor is ultimately kidnapped by the Tupamaros and executed. A further chapter re-presents the testimony of another of their victims, a businessman with fascist sympathies. In a novel without heroes, it is to Martínez Moreno's credit that he is critical of the Tupamaros, showing them to be elitist, middle-class led, and—unsurprisingly, given the context—rigidly hierarchical. This last trait becomes very apparent in one of the most moving stories told in the novel: Pascasio, a young rural worker, accidentally stumbles across a Tupamaro hideout in the countryside. The group holds him, wondering what to do with their captive: let him go (but then, he might tell), ship him to Cuba (difficult, given the circumstances), or kill him (but isn't he one of the people for whom they are supposedly fighting?). In the event the decision is made by the leadership of the movement far away in Montevideo, who decide that he must die. It is in such episodes that the narrator's voice is heard, commenting on the

story while organising it as a fiction: 'this is what comes from making a revolution greater than ourselves, a lack of proportion which robs us of choice and delivers us up to fate' (p 143).

Such dramatic moments in the novel are, however, rare, and are cut short by the author's desire to illuminate different aspects and moments of the political history he is telling. We are not presented with the dramatic unfolding of any one character living through the process Martínez Moreno is reconstructing, but are rather looking at it from different angles and concentrating on a variety of different experiences. The resulting effect of de-dramatisation is underlined by the fairly unemotional and blank style of the writing. The reason for Martínez Moreno's device, however, is quite clear: by expelling drama from the novel's interior, where it may be resolved through the development of character, he intends to make it part of the reader's own experience as he or she comes to the story from its exterior.

El Inferno was originally published in Mexico in 1981, where it won the Concurso Internacional Proceso-Nueva Imagen literary prize. With the return to democracy in Uruguay, the novel received the Ministry of Culture award in 1987. Unfortunately, Carlos Martínez Moreno died in exile in 1986 before he could return to his country. In this sense, the novel is also the author's own testimony. It is well translated—as always—by Ann Wright, and has a short introduction by John King, providing the reader with some historical and literary background.

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Artful weaving

Tibisiri: Caribbean writers and critics

Edited by Maggie Butcher

Sydney: Dangaroo Press. 1989. 138pp.

Tibisiri is a collection of creative and critical writing brought together to 'convey something of the dynamism and diversity of Caribbean writing' which the Caribbean Writers' Conference, organised by the Commonwealth Institute in London, in 1986, exemplified. Maggie Butcher, who played a large part in making that unique and highly successful conference happen, has compiled this stimulating anthology as a tangible celebration of its achievements.

In her foreword to the book, Maggie Butcher explains that the title of the anthology is taken from the name of the fibre traditionally woven by Arawak women, which suggested 'the artful weaving together of diverse strands of experience' that the collection attempts. Writers of three generations and various 'locations' are included and there are poems, stories and several kinds of cultural criticism.

To preserve some semblance of critical balance in this brief review I should find

some negative things to say about this book, but it is hard to. Some poems inevitably speak more directly to me than others, and there is an idiosyncrasy about some of the criticism that borders on the quirky. But, from the superb cover painting by Aubrey Williams through to the up-to-date Notes on Contributors, there is nothing with which I can pick any serious kind of quarrel.

The poetry in the book, by John Agard, E A Markham, Lorna Goodison and David Dabydeen, is a good selection across a wide field of styles, but is dominated by the fierce passion of Dabydeen's 'Coolie Odyssey', which is both a personal honouring of his recently deceased grandmother and a kind of cultural commentary on the ironies of colonial history. *Tibisiri* also includes two fine short stories, one from Olive Senior's forthcoming collection and another from a voice new to me, Diane Browne, whose story, 'The Land in the Purple Evening', catches the mellow, but none the less corrosive, antagonism between social classes at a certain period of Jamaican history.

But despite the excellence of the creative writing it is the criticism in *Tibisiri* that is its most memorable feature. Of the six essays in the collection, two are by father figures of modern Caribbean writing; John Figueroa—whose account of the origins of his famous anthology, *Caribbean Voices*, in the radio programme of the same name makes fascinating reading—and Wilson Harris, whose essay, 'Validation of Fiction: a personal view of imaginative truth', eloquently expresses his own ideas about the purpose and process of making 'fictions'. Two of the other critics are lecturers at the University of the West Indies; Elaine Savoury contributes a combative survey of the upsurge in creative writing published by Caribbean women in recent years, which she places in social context, while Ken Ramchand's 'A Personal View of Contemporary West Indian Literature' updates his seminal study of the West Indian novel, and makes some very pertinent observations about the place of orality in contemporary Caribbean word-culture.

What *Tibisiri* will really be remembered for, however, are essays by two, young, Guyanese-born poets who have studied and made their reputations in the UK. David Dabydeen's essay 'On Not Being Milton: Nigger Talk in England Today' argues for the distinctiveness of a black sensibility that draws on 'alien'—in 'British' terms—cultural assumptions, exploits its own linguistic resources and invents literary forms appropriate to the experience of black people living in Britain. Black British writers, he asserts,

participate in a West Indian literary tradition which seeks to subvert English canons by the use of lived nigger themes in lived nigger language.

To the extent that it identifies writers working in that tradition, the category 'Black British literature' can be seen to have some validity, and indeed importance. Fred D'Aguiar's essay 'Against Black British Literature' seems to take a very different position, arguing that:

The creative imagination knows no boundaries. Borders and passports do not confine it nor do attempts to hijack with neat terms said to be for the liberation of one section of it from the tyranny of another section. The communities of the imagination are multi-faceted and plural.

But what D'Aguiar is really arguing against is not the idea of 'difference' that Dabydeen embraces, but rather the simplification and negation of that difference when it is

constrained within a category such as 'Black British Literature', with all the echoes and implications he insists that term bears. These two essays focus crucial issues in the debates over the contemporary cultural practice of black writers working in the UK. Like the 'Walcott v Brathwaite' debate that unfolded in the Caribbean during the 1970s, the positions of both these writers are open to simplification and misrepresentation. (I have perhaps begun the process!) But the creative energies released by such a serious arguing out of these issues may prove to be just as significant for the direction of writing by people of Caribbean descent in Britain as the earlier debate was for the shape of contemporary West Indian literature.

Tibisiri will be essential reading for anyone at all concerned with the current state of the Caribbean's literatures.

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Worlds in tension

A Brief Conversion and other stories

Earl Lovelace

Oxford: Heinemann International. 1988. 141pp. £3.95pb

A Small Place

Jamaica Kincaid

London: Virago. 1988. 96pp. £9.95hb/£3.95pb

Sequins for a Ragged Hem

Amryl Johnson

London: Virago. 1988. 280pp. £4.95pb

Harriet's Daughter

Marlene Nourbese Philip

Oxford: Heinemann International. 1988. 150pp. £3.95pb

I have looked forward to the publication of Earl Lovelace's *A Brief Conversion and other stories* ever since hearing Lovelace read the story, 'Joebell and America', nearly two years ago. The entire collection would be worth it for that one humorous story, which in a very subtle manner encapsulates in its telling the Caribbean colonial and post-colonial experience. We follow Joebell from his home in a Trinidad dominated by the icons of US popular culture, to the gates of the USA, the immigration hall in Puerto Rico. Joebell first in his dreams and his style, then in his movements, takes us

through lands united by geography and history, and divided by the languages which are a consequence of that same history.

'Joebell and America' shares with the other stories in the collection Lovelace's mastery of character. The Trinidadian people of Cunaripo and its environs come vividly to life and their towns and villages remain peopled with an unforgettable collection of individuals—Miss Ross, The Fire Eater, Joebell. Lovelace's wry humour, his eye both for detail and for the quirks of human behaviour, have long established him as an outstanding storyteller. He paints tableaux with his words. His is essentially a gift for language, since he hears the cadences of people's voices, the ways in which they speak and keep silence. He can give voice to the unspoken, catch the rhythms of aspirations and quiet desires. He can also toss a conversation and corral an argument.

Lovelace's 'pastoral' vision is not a retreat into romanticism, for he retains his searing ability to see the deprivations of poverty, and disappointment. Yet none of this ever embitters his narrative voice. What endures are worlds in tension; poor worlds, rich in spirit; hard worlds, softened by dreams, and it is the dreams and interior lives of the characters that are their overriding realities, for these determine the ways in which they play out their lives. The collection is united in the end by this sense of life's tensions, whether creative or destructive. Lovelace creates characters who confront life in the grandeur of their dreams, and create magic in the minutiae of daily existence.

A Small Place and *Sequins for a Ragged Hem* are two very contrasting autobiographical narratives. Both are by island women, scrutinising their Caribbean homelands after the experience of exile, but there the similarity ends. Where Jamaica Kincaid's work is a journey through a familiar socio-political landscape, biting political in its intentions and impact, Amryl Johnson's is an intensely personal, sometimes bewildered, journey through an only partially familiar home.

Jamaica Kincaid's 'small place' is Antigua, and she speaks in particular of the history of Antigua and its legacy. The writing is clear, the anger controlled. A clarity of vision shapes a work striking for the searchlight of honesty turned upon the past and the present, colonial masters and self-chosen rulers, visitors and Antiguan alike. Kincaid first views Antigua from the perspective of a tourist, today, and then unleashes a series of ironic contradictions characteristic of the entire narrative. We see the island with double vision; from the perspective of the Euro-American tourist come to rest on an idyllic island, certain that the presence of his kind has always been, and will continue to be, beneficial. The double vision is sustained through the voice of the narrator-guide who exposes these fallacious perceptions on a guided tour through the island.

Though a guided tour, this work is a journey through time as well as space, exploring the history of slavery and colonialism and their consequences, as well as the history of independence and its disappointments. In the second part of the work we see the Antigua in which Kincaid grew up, controlled by the British who tried to make their colonies even more British than the homeland. Again, the power of the narrative works through contradictions; the ludicrous hypocrisy of the notions of superiority which were a part of the baggage and ideology of imperialism, and the deracinating self-violation of the acceptance or inheritance of such notions. The consequence, discussed in part three, is mimicry and self-mockery, a kind of death in a smallness of vision. Reading through the pages of Kincaid's ironic travelogue, much seems familiar. Her Antigua is not simply a small place, but represents far more than a single island. Its history, though peculiar to itself, has also been a shared colonial experience; many of Kincaid's

readers will understand and sympathise with her closing sentiments that in the end, the sign of true liberty will be to recognise ourselves, in the face of our histories, for what we are, not human rubbish, not noble and exalted slaves, but human beings.

Amryl Johnson's work is both far less, and far more unusual than Kincaid's. *Sequins for a Ragged Hem* is another journey, its form a more conventional travelogue, but its revelations more personally revealing. Her polemics are submerged, repressed even, and that is one of the burdens of the work. This journey is a return home, conducted not by someone sure of her place and her histories, but by someone uncertain of, and troubled by, both. After years of separation, Johnson's homecoming is a journey to exorcise ghosts and reclaim spirits. The frankness with which she undertakes this journey makes for sometimes uneasy reading. Nevertheless, the narrative's strength lies in the brutal honesty with which Johnson presents herself as an outsider in places where she should have felt at home. What is unsettling is the extent of her alienation. She has been away too long; but what is revealed in this self-exposing rite of passage is that the real distance was not one of time so much as of sensibility.

Johnson takes us with her on an internal and external journey. She travels through many Caribbean islands, beginning with her home island of Trinidad. Her 'external' journey is an enjoyable voyage through many unknown and half-familiar places, and her real contribution is her openness to change. We are given a personal guided tour through the islands, while she points out their *differences*. What fascinates are the parallels and the contradictions, in language, style, customs, amongst islands often in danger of being grouped together as one undifferentiated entity. But the uniqueness of the work lies in the revelation of the simultaneous internal journey. Johnson discusses her complex mixture of responses, which range from a sheer lyricism and joy at Carnival in Trinidad, to almost inexplicable feelings of alienation, for different reasons, in Guadeloupe and Dominica. She is torn between feelings of return to something she had once known, or been, and a realisation of how alien she feels, on account of class, experience and expectations. Amongst her most striking, and most surprising revelations, are her abhorrent responses to the living conditions of real poverty. What becomes powerful through her journey is her acceptance of a kind of responsibility.

Johnson's journey is in many ways a learning of the identifications Kincaid takes for granted. It is also a journey of real personal courage, ending in a gesture of commitment which reaches beyond the personal to the social and historical. *Sequins for a Ragged Hem* is both a gift received, and a gift bequeathed.

Marlene Nourbese Philip's *Harriet's Daughter* is essentially a young people's story, about adolescence. It is an uplifting tale of a young girl's world, her dreams and aspirations, and the joys and frustrations of reality. The Harriet of the title is Harriet Tubman, whose myth runs as a metaphor throughout. Its own virtues aside, this book joins the steadily increasing collection of stories for young people of colour, particularly those growing up in the Euro-American world, which give them a sense of their own history, their own heroes and their own place in the scheme of things, so that with a past to be proud of they can have a future to look forward to. And this novel achieves this by focusing not on the grandiose, but on the small, on the limits of a young girl's world, which are themselves as expansive as a young girl's dreams.

The world of this novel is not, despite the youthfulness of Margaret, the central character, a naive or completely inexperienced world. The metaphor of the underground

railroad which runs throughout is superbly used to make parallels about different kinds of slavery, different challenges which 'Harriet's daughters' must face and conquer to attain other kinds of freedom. Perceived initially as a game Margaret invents for the diversion of her friends, the 'underground railroad game', which is the subject of Margaret's narrative, becomes, in the end, a lesson on life, the past and the present. The disruption caused to the school and home lives of those who play the game, in which friends are divided into groups of slaves trying to reach freedom, or masters and dogs trying to prevent them, teaches them much not only about the social forces which shaped their past, but quite strikingly about those which shape their present as well. Liberation takes new forms; in addition to lessons on self-assertion and the responsibilities of the independence this brings, the young people learn to face the difficulties of the adult world.

They must learn to recognise and defeat new forms of slavery in the form, for example, of distorted value systems, unjust and incomprehensible authoritarian behaviour, and even the different forms of domestic violence. Put simply, the 'slave' that Margaret/Harriet needs to 'free', other than herself, is her friend Zulma, who needs to 'escape' from her equally oppressed 'slave' of a mother and her physically and emotionally violent 'master' of a stepfather, to return to liberty and her 'free' grandmother in Tobago. It is not without irony that the place Zulma needs to be freed from is Canada, the end of the underground railroad. But the simplicity belies the marvellous, often humorous, way in which the story is narrated and its interwoven themes teased out. This is a charming story, which reveals unexpected depth and complexity in working through contemporary problems in a new way.

ABENA P A BUSIA

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From infancy to maturity

Early Arabic Drama

M M Badawi

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 148pp. £25.00hb

Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt

M M Badawi

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987. 246pp. £27.50hb

Dr Badawi's contribution to the study of Arabic letters in English is indeed a commendable one. To name but two examples, there are his *Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse* (1971) and *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (1976), both of which have become lecture-room classics for students and teachers of Arabic literature since their publication in the 1970s. His two new books on Arabic drama published almost

simultaneously are yet another addition to a list of merit and can only be met with scholarly jubilation.

Between them, the two books span a period of roughly one-hundred-and-thirty years, virtually the age of the drama genre in Arabic. For drama, like the novel, is a borrowed rather than an indigenous form in Arabic; both having entered on the scene of Arabic letters during the second half of the nineteenth century. Dr Badawi's *Early Arabic Drama* is not the first treatment of the subject in English. One can list in this respect J M Landau's *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema* (1958), M Moosa's *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction* (1983) (which contains two chapters on drama) and M M Khozai's *The Development of Early Arabic Drama* (1984). The first of these is rather dated and incomplete, the second is a brave attempt to cover too much about drama within the limited room afforded in the context of a book mainly about fiction, while the third bears the hallmark of the middling PhD thesis it originally was. Thus, while Dr Badawi's book inevitably reuses in part already explored material, it nevertheless contains many valuable corrections, elaborations and re-evaluations, as well as fresh contributions to the existing body of research on the subject.

In common with all writers on the subject, Dr Badawi begins his study with a review of the indigenous dramatic tradition in Arabic culture. Thus, the book traverses the whole fascinating gamut of medieval *Ta'ziya*, *Qaragoz*, *Khayal al-Zill* and *maqama* only to arrive at the ineluctably anticlimactic conclusion that when modern Arabic drama was born in Beirut in 1847 with the performance of the Syrian, Marun al-Naqqash's *The Miser* before an invited audience in his house, it was as a result of European influence and not a continuation or a revival of native tradition! It remains one of the most paradoxical questions of cultural development and inter-cultural influences. It becomes even more so when we learn that when the newly imported form reached its maturity some one hundred years later in Egypt, there was suddenly a frenzied collective attempt by Egyptian playwrights to cast aside the European mould they had just mastered to near perfection, in favour of reviving and adapting indigenous popular dramatic forms for modern needs. This immensely interesting and puzzling phenomenon has yet to be addressed.

Arabic drama, then, was conceived and born in Syria whence it emigrated in its infancy to the culturally more benign environment of Egypt, there to grow up and quickly reach adulthood at the hands of its enthusiastic adoptive fathers. This being so, it is rather puzzling as to why Dr Badawi places the Egyptian, Ya'qub Sannu', earlier in the scheme of his book than his chronological forerunner, Marun al-Naqqash. Finally, worthy of particular mention is the author's 'respectful' approach to his material, which avoids the all too easy temptation to dismiss all early Arabic drama as primitive and only of historical value. Thus, new light is shed upon the work of the Egyptians, Ibrahim Ramzi, Muhammad Taymur and Antun Yazbak, some of it being shown to be of sufficient relevance and good dramatic quality to justify its revival today.

Early Arabic Drama can in effect be regarded as a long introduction to *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt*, which picks up the thread from the 1920s to the present day or, to be precise, the late 1970s. During the seventy-odd years which predate the period covered, the theatre became firmly grounded in the Egyptian cultural scene, gradually changing from a means of pure entertainment to an effective tool of social and political criticism.

One-third of the book's 240 pages is devoted to the study of the dramatic works of Tawfiq al-Hakim. The other two-thirds discuss no fewer than eighteen playwrights. While this is a token of the immense significance of al-Hakim's contribution to the Egyptian theatre, both in quantity (more than eighty plays) and quality, it is unfortunate that (within the scope of the book) this tribute had to be made at the expense of later generations of dramatists, some of whose leading figures will probably in the fullness of time come to be seen as no less important landmarks in the development of Arab theatre. Nevertheless, in comparison with Paul Starkey's study of al-Hakim, *From the Ivory Tower* (1987),* Dr Badawi's is thankfully a more sober and appreciative assessment, which includes occasional corrections of some of Dr Starkey's judgements (p 84, for example).

Perhaps most rewarding from the viewpoint of the uninitiated student of Arabic letters is the panoramic Chapter 4, which gives an engaging account of the dramatic 'explosion' of the 1960s in Egypt. The period saw a vast number of talented writers moving in every imaginable direction: from realism to the Theatre of the Absurd, and from adapting folklore to the European mould to reviving traditional moulds to express modern themes. Here the young scholar and not-so-young, non-literary Arabist will be able to reap the benefits of Dr Badawi's patient, descriptive style with its biographical and plot summaries.

It would have been of considerable help to lay readers of the book had a bibliography been included of Egyptian plays available in English translation, rather than occasional mention of translations being made in the notes. All being said, one thing is not in doubt: that the two new books will soon be established as required reading for Western students of Arabic literature.

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* Paul Starkey's *From the Ivory Tower: a critical study of Tawfiq al-Hakim* (1987) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10(2) April 1989, pp 185-87. For a Literary Profile of Tawfiq al-Hakim by M M Badawi, see *Third World Quarterly* 9 (2) April 1988, pp 949-60.

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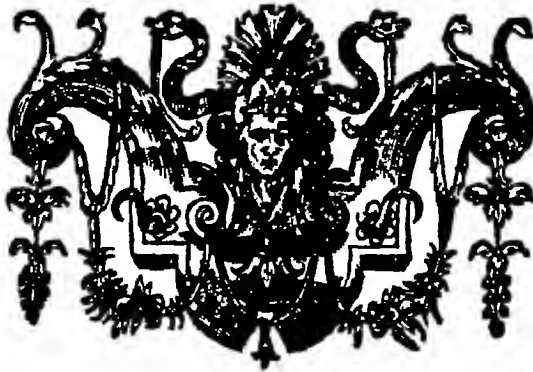
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FEATURE REVIEWS

Pakistan's predicament

Ayesha Jalal

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A H Kardar

Lahore: Ferozsons. 1988. 297pp. Rs 280hb

The Political Economy of Pakistan: 1947-85

Omar Noman

London/New York: Kegan Paul International. 1988. 218pp. £25.00hb

Strategic Issues in Pakistan's Economic Policy

Akmal Hussain

Lahore: Progressive Publishers. 1988. 411pp. Rs 300hb

Pakistan Under Martial Law: 1977-1985

Mohammad Waseem

Lahore: Vanguard Books. 1987. n/p

Pakistan and the Changing Regional Scenario: reflections of a journalist

Mushahid Hussain

Lahore: Progressive Publishers. 1988. n/p

There is a pressing need for incisive and well-researched studies to help raise the level of debate on the socio-economic and political issues facing Pakistan. In the past, works of serious scholarship on Pakistan have been few and far between. The most recent crop of publications by Pakistani authors must therefore be welcomed as a bountiful harvest. Together they take up the challenge—some more boldly than others—of addressing key issues in Pakistan's history and political economy. There is an abundance of ideas and much useful information in these books. But there is also the occasional relapse into corner-cutting in research and analysis. While they offer insights into particular aspects of Pakistan, none succeeds in outlining a conceptual framework in which to place this highly complex and strategically important corner of the world. Such a framework can best be constructed by combining an historical perspective with the analytical methods of political economy.

Post-colonial Pakistan is a particularly good case study of how the derailment of the political process contributes to long-term distortions in a country's political economy. The correction of these warps in the structure of the political economy is rather more difficult to effect—as a newly elected government is learning to its cost—than the tentative restoration of the political process. Strategies aimed at restructuring the political economy and, by the same token, consolidating the political process should consider the factors which initially led to imbalances between elected and non-elected institutions within the Pakistani state. It was during the first few years of Pakistan's independence that the interplay of domestic, regional and international factors shaped the unfolding dialectic between state construction and the political process, and facilitated the emergence of a political economy of defence under military and bureaucratic auspices. Hamza Alavi's well-orchestrated notion of the 'over-developed' state in post-colonial South Asia is based on the ahistorical assumption that the dominance of the civil bureaucracy and army in Pakistan is simply a carry over from the colonial era. It fails to account for the impact of the massive dislocations accompanying partition on the internal structuring of the two main institutional legacies of the colonial state and, by extension, on their relations with civil society. Constructing a new central government for the Pakistani provinces was a monumental task. Not only was the Muslim League least well organised in the Muslim-majority provinces but the civil bureaucracy and the military, far from being 'over-developed', were desperately short of skilled manpower and the requisite institutional infrastructure.

The initiation of hostilities with India very soon after independence robbed Pakistan of its share of military stockpiles. These had been purchased in international armament markets by a central government in dire financial straits. The need to raise revenues for both the defence establishment and the central government apparatus resulted in administrative expansion taking precedence over the building of a political party system to reflect Pakistan's linguistic and cultural heterogeneities. This imbalance was to have grave implications for relations between the new centre and the provinces. Administrative expansion and the diversion of scarce provincial resources into defence procurement tended to pit politicians at the provincial and local levels against civil bureaucrats appointed by the central government. With defence and administrative expenses swallowing over two-thirds of central revenues it was not long before the imperatives of state construction were on a collision course with the complex social dynamics underpinning the political process. The keen preference of Pakistan's early managers for administrative as opposed to political integration distorted both the centre-province equation and relations between the Punjabi and non-Punjabi provinces. The more so since with the exception of some Urdu-speaking migrants from India, Punjabis had most of the plum jobs in both the federal bureaucracy and the military. Skilful manipulation of inter-

national connections with London and Washington during the late 1940s and early 1950s allowed senior civil and military officials—loosely aligned with certain landed and business families in western Pakistan—to thwart the incipient political process, gearing the evolving state structure into sustaining a political economy of defence. The shift in the balance-of-power from elected to non-elected institutions has proved to be of an enduring nature. It has outlasted the breakaway of Bangladesh in 1971 and the populist interlude under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The interplay of domestic, regional and international factors since the late 1970s has served to confirm the vested interests of senior military and civil officials, and their allies among business and landed groups, in perpetuating the political economy of defence underpinning the Pakistani state structure.*

This then is the sort of framework in which the five works under review can most usefully be assessed. Despite differences of emphasis, Pakistan's present predicament is the point of departure of all the studies. Bemoaning the 'blatant denial of the political will of the people' by successive 'men on horseback', A H Kardar embarks upon a tortuous journey through Pakistan's post-independence history. While getting it right on many issues, the largely impressionistic nature of the analysis leads him into making too many asides with the result that the argument meanders into new pastures just when it hits upon an important point. Excessively long quotations from government publications and political pamphlets, as well as his earlier writings, confound the problem: poorly footnoted, if at all, they serve as a maze rather than as clarification. The author would have done well to incorporate the citations in the narrative to avoid breaking the reader's concentration and contradicting some of his own points. An example of poor footnoting is in Kardar's analysis of the East Pakistan débâcle, by far the most interesting part of the work. In what is an attempt at reassessing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's controversial role in the negotiations with General Yahya Khan and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, page after page of key documents are reproduced without a hint as to where a conscientious reader might gain access to them. Kardar largely absolves Bhutto of responsibility for the disintegration of Pakistan. But by not grasping the implications of the institutional imbalances within the Pakistani state structure and the fragility of Bhutto's and Mujib's bases of support, Kardar displays some measure of confusion about the alternatives to the final outcome. In one breath he argues that Mujib was 'bent upon secession and nothing could move him' (p 109) and that 'Pakistan was dismembered because the army rulers refused to honour the verdict of the people' (p 111). Then optimism triumphs over experience, leaving Kardar to assert that a political settlement could have been found

* For a more elaborate analysis of the argument see A Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: the origins of Pakistan's political economy of defence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

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* For a more elaborate analysis of the argument see A Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: the origins of Pakistan's political economy of defence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

even after the military action if the national assembly had been convened, by-elections held for seats occupied by the Awami League rebels and a representative caretaker government formed in East Pakistan where the '*jawans* [soldiers] had done a splendid job' (p 131)! Kardar's patriotism strains his objectivity. The work is nevertheless a useful contribution to understanding the tragic events of 1971 as well as the Bhutto period in which Kardar himself played a significant part.

A more successful analysis of that period, however, is to be found within Omar Noman's essay on the political economy of Pakistan. An ambitious enterprise covering Pakistan from its very inception to the period just before General Zia-ul-Haq's death, this study capitalises on secondary sources on Pakistan's history and political economy, albeit without fully acknowledging some of its debts. One theme informs the analysis throughout: there can be no unravelling of political dynamics in Pakistan without 'reference to the form, structure and consequences of economic policies'. Though this theme strengthens the core of his study, namely post-1971 developments, Noman's attempt to use it to provide a comprehensive framework falters on a somewhat superficial treatment of the first two-and-a-half decades during which the Pakistani state structure was constructed and consolidated. But this should not deflect the reader from his more profound analysis of the contradictions in Bhutto's 'authoritarian populism', the brazen use of 'socialist' reforms and the lure of state patronage to reward friends and punish opponents. The chapter on economic developments and their consequences during the Bhutto era is essential reading. Noman's treatment of the nexus between the PPP's populism and ideology relies considerably on the excellent doctoral work of Maleeha Lodhi and Philip Jones and is not nearly as well conceived and executed as his economic analysis. Yet there can be no questioning the author's conclusion: the pitfalls of the populist reforms and the mismanagement of the national economy, notwithstanding the PPP's rhetoric, transformed the equation between 'elites' and masses in Pakistani society. The final part of the study is a critical analysis of the Zia era which Noman correctly sees as an undisguised attempt at restoring the 'elite equilibrium' of the 1960s. While offering acerbic insights into the General's use, or more aptly misuse, of 'Islamic ideology' to gain legitimacy for his regime, Noman is much too quick in dubbing the Pakistani state under Zia a 'military theocracy'. A careful treatment of the concept of a 'theocracy'—literally a state governed by the religious guardians—would have allowed for a more interesting analysis of the contradictions between Zia's claims and the 'secular' functionings of Pakistan's military-bureaucratic state apparatus. Noman seems ill at ease using political concepts; taken on its own the chapter on the nature of the Pakistani state will leave the informed reader dissatisfied. It is in analysing economic developments in post-1971 Pakistan that Noman shows his real mettle, and this is what makes the book a worthwhile investment.

Akmal Hussain's study is more squarely focused on the structural constraints in the Pakistani economy. A compilation of papers presented at different forums, the study lacks an integrative principle. The familiarity of some of Akmal Hussain's main arguments, based on his doctoral work on the socio-economic contradictions spawned by the much vaunted 'Green Revolution', deprives the study of freshness. The author compensates for this, in part, by incorporating his more recent but less rigorous research on the declining employment-generating capacities of the Pakistan economy and the possible ways of altering this trend, given the prospect of a slow if steady return inflow of migrants from the Gulf. A most promising new direction in his research interests is a foray into the much neglected theme of child labour, a moral problem which he rightly traces to the structural distortions in Pakistan's political economy. He presents some startling statistics; one would like to see him develop this theme further, possibly by drawing upon similar studies based on other parts of the developing world. Akmal Hussain also discusses the issue of appropriate technologies, the tightening debt trap and growing inter- and intra-regional disparities, within the context of Pakistan's dependence on the advanced capitalist countries and the structural distortions of its political economy of defence. Issuing stern warnings about the sustainability of Pakistan's current economic development trajectory, Akmal Hussain sees no way of averting chronic socio-economic crises without a major restructuring of the state—a tall order given the enduring character of the shifts in the institutional balance-of-power within the Pakistani state structure.

Yet, short of fundamental structural change, social and economic engineering by regimes can alter crucial relationships over the short-term. Mohammad Waseem's collection of articles assesses the sort of changes that occurred during Zia's rule between 1977 and 1985. While Waseem focuses almost exclusively on the domestic political scene, some of Mushahid Hussain's writings on the same period bring in the regional and international dimensions. Taken together, these two books might help to reconstruct the interplay between domestic, regional and international factors in the past decade, illuminating the context of the political changes that are taking place in Pakistan today.

Waseem's book is a disparate collection of thirty-four articles of uneven quality. Portraits of politicians and political parties are interspersed with analyses of policies and issues. This assortment occasionally leads the author to stress contradictory explanatory frameworks. On the one hand, Waseem maintains that the public behaviour of politicians is shaped by the structural features of the state in Pakistan (p 99) and on the other, that 'understanding individual politicians is the key to understanding the political system in our country' (p 102). Yet those adept at culling information will find much that is useful in explaining why the Zia regime, while lacking popular legitimacy, became the longest surviving in Pakistan's history. The coercive power of the state combined with the absence of grassroots party organisations to render

the political opposition ineffectual. More important still was the changing mood of a society targeted with a systematic policy of depoliticisation. Cynicism towards politics and public causes found outlets in commodity fetishism, individual careerism and the gospel of self-interest. These trends enabled the Zia regime to bring about some significant, perhaps irreversible, shifts in the Pakistani political system. What Waseem is able to show is how a regime professing an Islamic ideology contributed to the extinction of ideological considerations at the level of local electoral politics. Beyond that, by changing the rules of the electoral game, the regime was able to bring local issues to the forefront at the expense of supra-local, not to mention national, programmes. The change of emphasis has complicated the task of reordering the existing state structure because parties and politicians are now even less able than before to play down local configurations of administrative and political power in national electoral politics.

The longevity of the Zia regime can be partially explained by his manipulation of domestic political equations. Regional and international factors, especially the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and subsequent US military and economic aid to Pakistan, interacted with the domestic initiatives of the General. While ignoring some of the implications of Zia's domestic manoeuvres for Pakistan's foreign relations, Mushahid Hussain's collection of interviews and articles analyses the changing geopolitical environment of the 1980s. The pieces on Afghanistan and US-Pakistan relations are of particular relevance. Mushahid Hussain confirms that US-Pakistan relations during the Zia era did not hinge solely on Afghanistan but were integral to Washington's Persian Gulf policy and the strategic concept of a Central Command.

While in one sense this collection of books has been overtaken by the events of late 1988, in another sense they have not. While the general elections of November 1988 in many ways marked a dramatic break with the past, the democratically elected government of Benazir Bhutto has inherited the awesome burden of a state structure and national economy which militate against any assertion of the supremacy of elected institutions over non-elected institutions. The political process, rather than being able to mould the state structure, has to a large extent become dependent on it. As ever, the state structure continues to be geared to sustaining a political economy of defence and to stressing local rather than national issues in the domain of electoral politics. Given these constraints and the absence of an effective, nationally-based political party organisation it is unclear whether an elected government can contest the imperatives of a pre-existing state structure. The temptation to make a pragmatic compromise with it may well prove to be overwhelming.

Namibia: the history of liberation

Richard Moorsom

Namibia: the struggle for liberation

Alfred T Moleah

Wilmington: Disa Press. 1983. 341pp. n/p

A History of Resistance in Namibia

Peter H Katjavivi

London: James Currey/Addis Ababa: Inter-African Cultural Fund/Paris: UNESCO Press. 1988. 152pp. £4.95pb

Battlefront Namibia

John Ya-Otto with Ole Gjerstad and Michael Mercer

Westport: Lawrence Hill. 1981. 151pp. n/p

Namibia 1884-1984: readings on Namibia's history and society

Edited by Brian Wood

London/Lusaka: NSC in cooperation with the UN Institute for Namibia. 1988. 762pp. n/p

Allies in Apartheid: Western capitalism in occupied Namibia

Edited by Allan D Cooper

London: Macmillan. 1988. 203pp. £29.50hb

As these lines are written, three weeks after the formal inauguration of the UN-sponsored, US-brokered transition process on 1 April 1989, the fate of Namibian independence hangs in the balance. The north is once more under night-time curfew, the South African military occupation of Ovamboland, home to nearly half the population and storm-centre of the liberation war of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), has never been more intense. Armoured patrols sweep the countryside, supported by helicopters and air strikes. South African forces dominate the belatedly set up UN assembly points and lay siege to local churches, the only independent gathering places to which guerrillas of SWAPO's People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) can resort. Hundreds of black Namibians have been slaughtered in indiscriminate massacres. The South African military command appears bent on wrecking all attempts to implement a workable ceasefire.

The five volumes under review go a long way towards explaining why Namibia, the last remnant of the European colonial epoch in sub-Saharan Africa, has been kept waiting so long for even the glimmer of a chance of independence. All are historical in content, all are motivated by a commitment to, and in several instances an active involvement in, the struggle for national liberation. Four have as their principal theme the tenacious and at times heroic resistance of the Namibian people to colonial oppression, individual and collective experiences which have powerfully shaped the political consciousness of the new nation. The fifth, a set of essays edited by Allan Cooper, focuses a penetrating searchlight on the most powerful of the economic interests which have financed South Africa's colonial enterprise, the transnational corporations (TNCs) exploiting the territory's abundant raw materials for profit, regardless of human cost.

These publications are part of a late flowering of research on Namibia's history. Today, the path to the State Archives in Windhoek is a well-worn track, and a rapidly expanding body of first-rate scholarship is in gestation or awaiting publication. Regrettably, no scholar can entirely avoid the crippling restraints of colonial rule. Fine works have indeed emerged, but the deformations of 'Bantu education', the desert of tertiary education, given the lack of research institutes or a university worth the name, and the barriers of exile have blocked opportunities for researching their own country's history to all but a few black Namibians. Abroad, lacking safe and career-building research options within Namibia, very few academics have adopted Namibia as a principal interest, and much of the substantive work has been undertaken in a solidarity context.

The five volumes well exemplify the achievements and constraints, the diversity and the silences in this formative phase of modern research on Namibia. There is commendably strong (and predominantly black) Namibian representation: two of the solo authors (Ya-Otto and Katjavivi) and some forty of the 120 contributors to the '100 years' anthology are Namibian. Similarly, all eleven of Cooper's contributors are both activists and amongst 'the world's leading scholars on Namibia', while only three were at the time of writing in academic posts.

Moleah and Katjavivi offer general and panoramic histories of Namibian resistance to colonial rule and the rise of the national liberation movement. Moleah's is a rarity: a full-scale work on Namibia by a black South African—the only other recent example that springs to mind is the penetrating and all-too-brief work of Neville Alexander, extracts of which appear in the Wood volume. Although unstated, the book appears to originate in a thesis and to be self-published ('Moleah Publishers, Inc.'). If so, the author is nothing if not confident in the merits of his work, which according to his blurb is 'thorough, incisive and comprehensive' and 'covers the issue in all its facets and manifestations'.

Moleah does indeed set out to provide a general history of Namibian resistance from the first German colonisation to the long negotiating stalemate in the early 1980s, the weight of emphasis being on the last two decades. The book is shot through with simple certainties. At the outset the author declares his conviction that the liberation of Namibia is the 'penultimate point' in a continent-wide 'African struggle for liberation'; its principal aim is 'social reconstruction aimed at liberating the resources and labour of the African people' and for that reason has a 'revolutionary character'. It is this struggle that objective racism and imperialism attempt to destroy by 'massive and brutal military defeat' or by 'detouring into the cul-de-sac of neo-colonialism'. However, 'revolutionary victory has become inevitable'.

Given such inevitability, historical analysis and argument is largely superfluous. Forced into a simple 'repression-resistance' paradigm, whose end is never in doubt, the story becomes an expository tale of wickedness and heroism. Few paragraphs escape the intrusion of a rhetorical fervour better suited to the populist platform than to the learned aspirations betokened by the text's scholarly trappings. The more challenging historical issues are not so much dismissed as scarcely noticed. The same applies to the conflicts and crises by which a liberation movement, like any political party, restructures its identity and its strategy: SWAPO's major crisis of 1976 is completely ignored, the central figure, Andreas Shipanga, appearing only later as an unexplained renegade.

Perhaps the greatest irony is the fact that despite the frequent legitimating calls to SWAPO's authority, the liberation movement makes but marginal appearances in the unfolding narrative. The exposition is driven by the actions of the oppressors, their puppets and their foreign backers, who receive the detailed attention. SWAPO, and Namibians generally, remain the passive foil to their endless machinations, suffering steadfastly, resisting heroically, but dancing to their oppressors' tune, rarely setting their own agenda. The formation of SWAPO, its debates and strategies, its mobilisation campaigns and unity drives, its sustained armed struggle and tireless diplomacy, all these are scarcely mentioned. Although explicitly partisan and popular in style, SWAPO's own *To be Born a Nation* (1981), on which the author relies heavily, provides a more satisfactory history of resistance and liberation, a history which, moreover, treats the 'process' of liberation with a seriousness that Moleah conspicuously fails to demonstrate.

What Moleah's book boils down to is a somewhat superficial history not of 'the struggle for liberation' but of the strategies and methods of repression. In this it succeeds rather well. Stripped of its polemical overlay and any broader analytic pretensions, it provides a lengthy, detailed account of colonial repression, competently written in a straightforward narrative mode. This is in one sense a perverse result, for no archival and very few published primary sources are used at all, and only the major secondary authorities. However, these are summarised with reasonable care. Only where he extends to current

media sources towards the end does the author's uncritical use of evidence begin to let him down. It is implausible, for example, to take at face value the wild claims of one of the far-right factions to command the allegiance of a majority of whites in Namibia. Nevertheless, as a summary of the principal literature, it serves as a useful reference volume.

The tone of Dr Katjavivi's *A History of Resistance in Namibia* could hardly contrast more sharply. This is a sober, well crafted text with scarcely an emotive word in sight. The absence of rhetoric adds dignity to an authority founded on the author's lifelong and prominent commitment to SWAPO's cause since the earliest days of its inauguration in 1960. As its Western European Representative (1968-76) and then Secretary for Information (1976-79), his indefatigable lobbying helped push Namibia firmly onto the political agenda, before he moved into academic research in 1979.

This book is the first mature fruit of that research. It draws heavily on the author's doctoral thesis, which contains additional illuminating detail, and the only regret can be that the publication of both was not synchronised. It covers the broad sweep of Namibian political history from the first Namibian encounters with Cape traders and farmers through to the impasse of 'linkage' in 1983. Half the text is devoted to the last dozen years and is strengthened at many turns by Katjavivi's personal contact with the events and personalities portrayed. It is a little disappointing that detailed coverage virtually ends in 1978, and one can only hope for an early sequel.

The book's scholarly foundations are far more substantial than Moleah's, integrating a wide range of evidence and analysis from monographs, theses, official records, private papers and interviews. It is chronologically arranged and conventionally narrative in form. The author avoids theory as severely as he does polemic, and there is less here of the political economy evident in *To be Born a Nation*, which was produced under his direction before his resignation in 1979.

Katjavivi's restraint does occasionally underplay the significance of seminal events. On the horrific massacre of Namibian refugees at Kassinga in May 1978 by the South African Defence Force (SADF), a deliberate ploy calculated to force SWAPO to withdraw from the UN negotiations at a sensitive stage, he omits to mention (p 110) that his own office, having received advance intelligence, warned of an imminent major attack. The Contact Group nevertheless did nothing to restrain the South Africans; as the SWAPO book pointed out, the blood of the victims was on their hands, too.

But equally, unlike Moleah, Katjavivi does not flinch from tackling controversial issues. Most notably, he gives a full and balanced account of SWAPO's 1976 crisis (p 105-8), an act of considerable political courage for someone of his seniority and closeness to the events of that traumatic episode. He points, correctly, to SWAPO's 'readiness . . . to countenance a Commission of Enquiry, whose findings and recommendations showed up many problems in SWAPO's

organisational procedures and leadership, and a readiness to try to overcome these' (p 129). Such refreshing openness is all too rare and can only strengthen the commitment to democratic ideals.

Above all, it is the Namibian people's courageous resistance to overwhelmingly powerful oppressors that holds centre stage. One notes with a little surprise his judgement that it was not until 'the end of the 1970s' that SWAPO's position as 'the major nationalist organisation in the country' was secured (p 128), but his scrupulous accuracy in acknowledging the importance of the mass mobilisation of 1976-77 in central/southern Namibia outweighs any amount of mystifying rhetoric. Only by such clarity can we understand how SWAPO has succeeded in welding a 'truly national movement' amidst great cultural diversity and apartheid's ethnic divisiveness.

If Katjavivi's is the commitment of cool diplomacy, Ya-Otto's belongs to the blood and thunder of political struggle under the colonial jackboot. *Battle-front Namibia* is a classic political autobiography which, although published some years ago, should be read today by anyone wanting to understand the mettle of SWAPO's current leadership. It is the gripping, eventful account of the upbringing, political education, suffering and active engagement in the struggle of one of SWAPO's senior leaders up to his departure into exile in 1974. His two editorial collaborators have done a fine job in welding a coherent and tightly written narrative as a vehicle for a remarkable life history. It is also a representative history, in the sense that Ya-Otto was nominated by SWAPO to undertake the task.

Ya-Otto's story is a thoughtful balance between emotion and measured judgement which conveys in vivid prose, unclouded by invective, the feel of the events and experiences he relates. His integrity shines through at every turn: self-criticism is not spared where due, nor pride in real achievements. His recall is often detailed and his observations on the motivations of colleagues, fellow-Namibians, white colonists and policemen are often penetrating. His testimony throws much light on SWAPO's first fifteen years, poorly covered in other publications. He observed or participated in the Windhoek massacre (1959), the first Terrorism trial (1967), the contract workers' strike (1971-72) and the floggings in Ovamboland (1973-74).

Ya-Otto's life history is in the same mould as Vinnia Ndadi's equally impressive autobiography of a contract worker, which Mercer also recorded and edited. It offers an all too rare insight into Namibians' experience of colonialism; oral history of all kinds is one of the more urgent scholarly priorities. It brings home the harsh reality that many of Namibia's political leaders have suffered: not merely the petty humiliations of racism and poverty, but repeated imprisonment and torture. Few leaderships elsewhere in Africa have had to pay such heavy personal sacrifices for their cause. It is scarcely to be wondered that even today Namibians take the long view and place so little trust in South Africa's good faith.

Namibia 1884-1984 combines features of the previous three books and much more besides. The Namibia Support Committee's week-long conference in September 1984, called to mark one hundred years of colonial rule over Namibia, was an extraordinary gathering of hundreds of scholars and activists from all over Europe, and scores of Namibians and SWAPO leaders from many countries in the diaspora as well as Namibia itself. Despite having less than two months to prepare, no fewer than seventy-six papers were submitted, the great majority being new work. This anthology contains most of the papers together with the addresses by keynote speakers, several of which were major contributions, and conference documents and statements, as well as a set of pre-conference readings drawn from the available literature. It provides a fitting record of a unique and exhilarating intellectual occasion. Brian Wood is to be highly commended for completing the herculean task of organising half-a-million words of disparate material into an accessible, meticulously edited text. His introduction and Gavin Williams' conference report (also separately published as a pamphlet) provide a valuable assessment of the themes and debates which this conference catalysed.

The resulting compendium contains a tremendous diversity of material, ranging from short student essays to extracts from dissertations to published articles and chapters, from political statements to academic history. It includes discussions of theoretical controversies, analyses of historical processes and narrative accounts, as well as other modes of expression—a set of poems in traditional style, a play posing the dilemmas of leadership in resisting colonisation, a 'docu-drama' of life as a contract worker, autobiographical episodes, transcripts from the appeal against the banning of the *Windhoek Observer*, the text of the remarkable 1858 Peace Treaty of Hoachanas. The papers' coverage extends across diverse themes and methodologies as well as a long timespan.

It is immediately apparent that this is not a tightly integrated, balanced collection but a highly eclectic bundle with plenty of gaps and a host of unfinished discussions. The anthology's major achievement is to capture the freshness and immediacy of debate on the past of a nation in formation, a past largely obscured to Namibians by colonialist propaganda and scholarly silences. Not the least fascinating aspect is the beginning of debate amongst Namibians themselves on issues such as social and land inequalities in pre-colonial communities, the ambiguities of heroism and compromise in resistance leadership, and the role of women in the liberation struggle. Through such debates Namibians rediscover their heritage and forge tools to construct their future.

The anthology will serve varied purposes as a resource text for teaching and study, a reference for activists and researchers, and an illuminating introduction to Namibia's experience of colonialism for the general reader. *Allies in Apartheid* is more academic in content and design, although it will also prove valuable to activists. It comprises nine separate essays addressing the common

theme of foreign economic interests in Namibia, the first dealing generally with the pre-colonial and German periods (Melber) and the other eight with particular countries or regions.

The country framework does impose limitations. Most major economic linkages are covered but a few are missing, including the biggest of all, with South Africa, which complicates external connections channelled through South Africa. It also constrains both analysis and presentation of data since TNC ownership structures are international even if many have a principal country base, and trade connections can be equally complex. Uranium is a case in point: ownership of the Rössing mine consortium defines one network, the marketing and processing of the yellow-cake another. Their complexities result in uranium turning up in six of the eight country sections, making it difficult to construct an overview and follow the interconnections. Conversely, the 'Netherlands' section, while focusing on the role of the home government, extends well beyond national boundaries in assessing the URENCO processing partnership. The country framework is, however, much more useful for those whose main interest is in national policies and campaigns, especially in view of the wealth of factual information; and makes it simpler to draw comparative perspectives. But publication as an expensive academic hardback may deter many buyers.

The essays are organised around a common agenda centring on Western economic interests in Namibia, solidarity campaigns against them, and the evolution of government policy. They vary in emphasis, some concentrating on recent campaigns and policies, others more on the history of economic exploitation. The prominence given to the history of certain campaigns is of particular value: campaigning NGOs rarely have the time to write up their histories in any depth. Cooper's general conclusion that 'throughout the Western alliance, but especially in the United States, the anti-apartheid movement has assumed a fundamentally conservative character' (p 194) is striking and will surprise some European NGOs. This conservatism, he contends, 'has also inhibited any great focus on Namibia', whose case 'challenges the citizens of Western states to question the representative nature of their respective governments, and to evaluate their commitment to the universal ethical principles symbolised by international law'.

This is an 'engaged' book: as the editor affirms in his preface, 'the contributors ... hope that in some way our "detective work" will hasten the independence and self-determination of Namibia', and offer their royalties to SWAPO. Its precise relationship to the 1982 Washington conference on the Role of TNCs in Namibia, which was organised by the American Committee on Africa and to which all the contributors presented papers, remains a little obscure. Cooper pays tribute to its inspiration, but declares that 'the contributions to this book are not copies of the papers presented to the 1982 conference'. In practice, a cursory comparison reveals that more than half the

chapters are revisions of or incorporate parts of the authors' earlier papers, although in only one case (Erichsen/Hogberg/Tostensen) is this origin explicitly acknowledged. However, all have been revised, the majority extensively; the result is a major body of research on the economic exploitation of Namibia.

In view of its lengthy gestation the updating of data is rather variable, although a 1986 cut-off seems to have been observed. Descriptions of ownership and trade patterns are always vulnerable to sudden changes: this book does note the take-over of Tsumeb by Gold Fields, but misses the transfer of Hudson's Bay (karakul pelts) from Canadian to Finnish ownership.

All five books contribute materially, if not always precisely as the authors intended, to advancing our understanding of the forces that have brought Namibia to the verge of independence and of the difficult historical inheritance of the new nation. One hopes that independence will finally liberate all Namibians to discover, research, assess and debate that inheritance.

The US report on Israel: a commentary

Shaw J Dallal

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1988

Section on Israel and the Occupied Territories

Washington DC: US Department of State. 1989

In its Report on Human Rights Practices in Israel and The Occupied Territories for 1988, which was released in February 1989, the US Department of State asserts to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the US Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the US House of Representatives that: 'Political killing is not condoned by Israel and is not practised by the Israeli Government in the occupied territories.' This assertion is, in fact, belied by the body of the Department of State's report itself.

The report acknowledges that '366 Palestinians were killed in 1988', and that 'over 20,000 Palestinians were wounded or injured'. These deaths and injuries were perpetrated by Israeli soldiers and settlers, according to the report, where 'soldiers frequently used gunfire in situations that did not present mortal danger to troops, causing many avoidable deaths and injuries'. The report goes on to admit that 'regulations' pertaining to these killings 'were not rigorously enforced', and draws attention to the fact that 'punishments were usually lenient', acknowledging that 'there were many cases of unjustified killing which did not result in disciplinary actions or prosecutions'.

If innocent Palestinians are unjustifiably murdered by Israeli soldiers and

settlers, who are either not accountable to Israeli authorities for these murders or are given lenient treatment, how can the Department of State in good conscience conclude that these murders are 'not condoned by Israel'?

Despite the above contradiction, it must be recognised that this year's report is an improvement over the unconscionably routine justifications for the annual aid Congress grants to Israel embodied in reports of prior years.

Conspicuously absent from this year's report was the untenable assertion that 'Israel . . . guarantees by law and respects in practice the civil, political and religious rights of its citizens,' which tainted prior reports. Instead, and for the first time, the report acknowledges that 'Arab citizens of Israel, who constitute approximately 17 per cent of the population, do not share fully in the rights granted to, or the duties levied on, Jewish Israeli citizens. They are clustered at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale'.

Another part of the report states that approximately '82 percent of Israeli citizens are Jewish'. The remaining 18 per cent are Palestinians who are 'Muslims, Christians, and Druze . . .' There are other minority religions in Israel. The report states that the 'law of return of 1950, which abolished restrictions on Jewish immigration, and the citizenship law of 1952, which granted every Jew the right to citizenship on arrival in Israel, confer advantages to Jews in matters of immigration, residence, and citizenship,' which are denied to Israeli Palestinians because they are not Jews. A Jew under the law of return is defined as one born of a Jewish mother or one converted to the Jewish faith. The Department of State recognises that the law of return, which applies to Jews only, is denied to the Palestinians 'who left the area that became Israel in 1948'. These Palestinians, the report laments, 'have no guaranteed right to return', even though 'United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194', which the USA had voted for, 'called on Israel to permit the return' of the Palestinians 'or to compensate them for their losses if they choose not to return'. Israel has refused to abide by this resolution.

The harshest part of the Department of State report is reserved for the Occupied Territories. In addition to the killings referred to earlier, the report discusses in detail other gross human rights violations, such as torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of Palestinians. It confirms, for example, that in 1987 a special judicial commission, headed by the former presiding judge of the Israeli Supreme Court, reported that the Israeli Secret Service, Shin Bet, had for many years used 'physical and psychological pressure', described in a secret annex, to obtain coerced confessions from Palestinian detainees. These practices continue to this day. They include 'beating' of prisoners, 'harsh and demeaning treatment', such as 'forcing prisoners to remain in one position for prolonged periods, hooding, sleep deprivation', and the 'use of cold showers'. The report confirms the 'widespread beating of unarmed Palestinians' in 1988. It makes reference to the policy announced by Israel's Minister of Defence of 'force, might, and beatings', and confirms 'wide-

spread incidents' where the Israeli Defence Forces 'used clubs to break limbs and beat Palestinians' who were not involved in disturbances. The report describes how Israeli soldiers 'turned many people out of their homes at night, making them stand for hours', and how they 'rounded up men and boys and beat them'. It states that 'at least 13 Palestinians have been reported to have died from beatings'.

The report states that Israel moved more than '2000 administrative' Palestinian detainees from the Occupied Territories to 'a detention camp in the Negev desert' inside Israel, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It documents the widespread incidents of arbitrary arrest, detention and exile to which the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories were subjected, confirming that 'Thirty-six Palestinians were deported in 1988'. These deportations 'contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention in the view of the United States'. Also detailed are the numerous incidents of arbitrary interference with privacy, family and home, committed against the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories: 'At least 154 houses of Arabs were demolished . . . affecting over 1,000 people'. The Israeli authorities 'took these actions after the occupants were accused . . . but prior to trial and convictions'. The report concedes that these demolitions always cause 'damage to neighboring houses'.

The conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis revolves around the legalised discrimination against the Israeli Palestinians in the state of Israel, and the persecution of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, both of which are made more explicit in this year's Department of State report, than in previous reports. Yet, in violation of its own domestic laws, and in violation of its commitments to the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the US government continues to aid and abet Israel's conduct, by giving it substantial annual military and economic grants, and by defending its gross human rights violations in the UN Security Council. By providing both financial aid and political support, the USA is rendered an accomplice to Israel's human rights violations. These violations, by any objective standard, constitute crimes against humanity.

The US government appears to contradict itself. On the one hand, it details with meticulous accuracy gross Israeli human rights violations, both within Israel and in the Occupied Territories, which contravene the Geneva Convention. It then proceeds to certify to Congress that Israel is not guilty of human rights violations, and is therefore eligible for the vast amount of aid it receives from the USA.

This paradoxical behaviour was recently repeated when a resolution came before the UN Security Council condemning Israel's violations of human rights in the Occupied Territories. The USA cast the lone dissenting vote against the resolution. It is this callous disregard by the US government for the suffering of the Palestinians who live in the Occupied Territories that has contributed towards the frustration and disillusionment of a world striving for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

BOOK REVIEWS

Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902-1915

Brenda Gayle Plummer

Baton Rouge, Louisiana/London: Louisiana State University Press. 1988. 255pp. £26.15hb

From Dessalines to Duvalier: race, colour and national independence in Haiti

David Nicholls

London: Macmillan Caribbean. 1988. 357pp. £9.95pb

Haiti's Future: views of twelve Haitian leaders

Edited by Richard M Morse

Washington DC: The Wilson Center Press (distributed in the UK by Eurospan). 1988. 129pp. £19.95hb/£8.95pb

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. The pessimistic dictum seems sadly appropriate to what has happened in Haiti over the last three years. A proto-revolutionary movement (nipped in the bud by the USA) ended the twenty-nine-year Duvalier dictatorship in February 1986, but Baby Doc was merely replaced by his military high command. Several massacres, two coups and a brief puppet presidency later, General Prosper Avril, former adviser to the Duvaliers, repeats the ominous and familiar warning that 'Haiti is not yet ready for democracy'.

A certain sense of *déjà vu* is inescapable, too, when Haiti's recent traumas are viewed in the context of long-standing antagonisms and obstacles. In 1910, for example, US Ambassador Furniss wrote of the Haitian military as 'the scourge of the nation . . . the evil eating out its very vitals'. Eighty years later, the language has doubtless changed, but the sentiments within the State Department may reasonably be assumed to be similar. In a country where the accidents (and triumphs) of history appear to weigh more than usually heavily, parallels between past and present are particularly conspicuous. But they can also be misleading, reducing Haiti to a sort of unchanging stereotype of permanent backwardness rather than a complex and dynamic society. It is the latter view of the country that is offered in two excellent histories of Haiti which cast considerable light on its current predicament.

In *Haiti and the Great Powers* Brenda Gayle Plummer concentrates on a thirteen-year period of '*fin-de-siècle* disarray' in which Haiti's internal struggle between sections of the elite (supported by paid irregular militias) was further complicated by inter-imperial rivalry between the declining European powers and the ascendant USA. This last rivalry took many forms: competition over Haiti's predominantly import-dependent economy, military threats to the Haitian government in support of nationals' claims for compensation, and diplomatic and strategic manoeuvring around the Panama Canal. Plummer's achievement lies in drawing together the internal and external factors in this age of extraordinary ferment in which Haitian presidencies collapsed with monotonous regularity and the USA claimed the Caribbean as its own sea.

The internal and external were to meet in 1915, when the US Marines landed outside Port-au-Prince and began a nineteen-year occupation. Haiti's seemingly peren-

nial instability had become too distasteful to the USA, which was worried about this unruly neighbour's proximity to the newly opened Panama Canal. Plummer points out, however, that the apparent chaos within Haitian political life in fact concealed a self-regulating process of power-sharing, whereby competing sections of the ruling class overthrew one another at regular intervals. This process, writes Plummer, had 'mechanistic qualities', ensuring the continuing dominance of one faction or another of the elite. Valuable insights are also provided into the dynamics of turn-of-the-century Haitian mercantilism and the vitality of civic and cultural life during a period of extreme unrest.

Plummer's work owes an obvious debt to David Nicholls's *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, and it is good to see the by-now standard English-language history of Haiti reissued in paperback. The chronological scope of this book is clearly much wider than that of Plummer's, stretching from colonial St Domingue to the Duvaliers, but a consistent theme lends cohesion to the work. Nicholls's thesis is that race and colour are separate ideological entities in Haitian history, the former acting as a unifying force in the expression of national sovereignty, the latter as the crux of conflict between the mulatto elite and the black majority. Nicholls shows how two distinct versions of Haitian history have traditionally co-existed, one black and one coloured, and how the diametrically opposed cultural reference points of Africa and France have shaped Haitian political thought.

Nicholls emphasises the role of colour in the rise of the Duvalier dictatorship, noting that Papa Doc's intellectual attachment to the fashionable current of *négritude* served as a useful vehicle for mobilising black opinion against the elite. A significant factor in Baby Doc's downfall, conversely, was his perceived abandonment of the upwardly mobile black middle class and his alliance with the same elite. The constituency of Duvalierism was hence eroded, allowing a combination of factors—the Church, an increasingly militant peasantry, the scandals of Haitian cane-cutters in the Dominican Republic and the 'boat people'—to weaken the regime further.

Although rid of the Duvaliers, Haiti is currently saddled with a reactionary military government, torn between outright dictatorship and accommodation with the USA. The seeds of the present situation are to be clearly seen in both books: in Plummer's detailed analysis of Haiti's militarism and economic vulnerability, and in Nicholls's account of an authoritarian tradition that reaches back to the colonial period.

A sense of realism, almost scepticism, over Haiti's prospects for democratisation emerges from *Haiti's Future*, a collection of papers from various Haitian academics, politicians, human rights workers and technocrats. Presented in September 1986, when a transition to civilian rule from the post-Duvalier military regime still seemed plausible, the papers underline some of the huge obstacles confronting Haiti: extreme economic inequality, catastrophic environmental degradation caused by land hunger, institutionalised corruption and, critically, the lack of any democratic tradition. 'There can be no democracy in a country where some families monopolize political power and economic resources', writes Jean-Jacques Honorat, 'and the majority are not treated as human beings'. If left to the Haitian military and the largely ineffectual political contenders, democracy does indeed seem a distant prospect.

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* James Ferguson's *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers* (1987) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 11(1) January 1989, pp 206–8, and is now available in an updated paperback edition: Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, 184 pp, £7.95pb.

The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830-1967: colonial upheavals and post-independence development

Mahfoud Bennoune

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 323pp. £35.00/\$54.50hb

Non-Alignment and Algerian Foreign Policy

Assassi Lassassi

London: Avebury. 1988. 234pp. £26.00hb

All things being equal, new books on Algeria in English are very welcome, and Mahfoud Bennoune's nominal subject certainly calls for extended treatment. The Algerian Revolution is one of the great revolutions of this century but its essential achievement, the establishment of the first ever truly Algerian state and the creation of the Algerian nation, have yet to be adequately described. Unfortunately, the publication of *The Making of Contemporary Algeria* in no way modifies this state of affairs. While Bennoune's work has one major virtue (its combative vindication of the development strategy of the Boumedienne regime), its shortcomings are so numerous and so grave that the valid element of its argument is unlikely to carry conviction with the discriminating reader.

In Bennoune's defence, however, it must be said that not all of the book's failings are his fault. Two of them at least can be laid at the publisher's door. First there is the fact, which contributes substantially to the book's unreadability, that Bennoune's working knowledge of English falls far short of mastery; Gallicisms and mistranslations from the French abound in his writing and one can only wonder why they have not been corrected. Does Cambridge University Press no longer employ staff to carry out this kind of essential work on the manuscripts of foreign authors whom they publish?

The same applies to the numerous misprints and errors which litter the text. For example, on page 53 the year 1956 should be 1856; in table 4:7 (page 70) the figure 21.3 should be *minus* 1.3; in table 4:9 (page 75) the figure 220 should be 22; on page 166 the figure 53 should be 533; on page 169 the figures 1496 and 1482 should both be 1484; in table 8:2 (page 177) the figure 6198 should be 16198; the column headings in table 8:2 are completely mixed up. And so on. It is not necessary to be a specialist on Algeria to notice these errors. Does the publisher no longer employ proof readers? Then the book is punctuated by eccentric and often downright incorrect renderings of Arabic terms (for example, 'gabyla' for 'qabila'; 'khammassats' for 'khammes'; 'zauiyas' for 'zawiyas' and, most notably, 'ulamah' for 'ulama'). This will not do at all. Mahfoud Bennoune has been badly let down.

A third problem may also be attributable to the publisher. The book's title is quite misleading. The book is not an account of the making of contemporary Algeria at all. Such an account would, at the very least, include a substantial chapter on the revolutionary war of 1954-62 and a proper analysis of the Algerian nationalist movement and of the nature of the National Liberation Front (FLN). Nothing of the sort is to be found in this book. The revolution is accorded a most peremptory and inadequate discussion in the last seven pages of chapter 4, and thus classed among the 'Socio-

economic consequences of colonial development'. There is no serious discussion of the great Islamic Reform movement led by Ben Badis in the period of 1920-40; Messa Hadj, the pioneer of the radical nationalist movement and its principal leader from 1926 to 1954, receives the briefest possible mention in passing, and Abane Ramdane the political leader of the FLN during the crucial 1955-57 period, is not even mentioned at all.

What Bennoune has actually written is a (highly partisan and polemical) critique of Algeria's economic development from 1830 to 1987. A title which would actually reflect the content of his book would be more like *Underdevelopment and aborted industrialisation in Algeria*. Although Bennoune himself remarks that 'the success or failure of development is determined by political rather than technical factors' (p 10), he provides no analysis of these factors in this study of the Algerian case; he is by training an economist, and has written a narrow-minded economist's book, devoid of either sociological insight or political understanding. He accordingly fails to explain satisfactorily the disappointing developments which he describes and instead resorts all too frequently to empty moralising and what amounts to conspiracy theory at crucial moments in his argument.

But even as an account of Algeria's economic development the book is unsatisfactory. Instead of reasoned analysis, Bennoune deluges the reader with statistics. There are no fewer than 105 tables but, as though this were not enough, vast tracts of the written text are also given over to litanies of statistics. The reader who is not forced by boredom to abandon the book soon gets lost in this jungle of figures. Moreover, a very high proportion of the figures quoted in the text are quite undocumented, merely asserted. Indeed, there is very little argument or reasoning in the book, which consists to an extraordinary degree of bald, unsubstantiated and often wholly tendentious assertions. For example, Bennoune claims that in the late 1960s and early 1970s:

all the members of the so-called revolutionary council, except its chairman, Boumedienne—who did not even deem it necessary to consult the others on the matter—opposed the nationalisation of foreign interests. (page 127)

Not a shred of evidence is offered in support of this important statement, nor is any authoritative source cited for it. A few pages later, Bennoune informs us that:

according to a revelation by a former member of the US government, the French secret service suggested to the CIA in 1975 the possibility of assassinating Boumedienne in an attempt to neutralise Algeria's influence in world affairs and to put an end to its internal development . . . (p 134)

This even more important allegation is entirely unsupported. Neither the source of the revelation nor the identity of the 'former member of the US government' who allegedly made it are specified. For all the reader knows, it is simply a piece of wholly unreliable hearsay. But it is by no means unique; Bennoune's book is full of such items: of undocumented tittle-tattle which he has apparently picked up in the ante-rooms of power in Algiers, and lengthy 'quotations' for which no source or reference whatever is given. In short, several elementary canons of scholarship are repeatedly honoured in the breach.

All this is a pity, since despite its many flaws Bennoune's book does have one good and very important point to make, in its defence of the strategy of rapid industrialisation pursued by the Boumedienne government from 1965 to 1978, and in the corresponding

critique of the Chadli government's decision to abandon this strategy in the 1980s. The point of view which Bennoune advances here is a very unfashionable one: dead dictators are convenient scapegoats, and Boumedienne's successors have been only too happy to blame the results of their own mistakes on their predecessors in government. Bennoune is to be congratulated for defying current fashion in Algiers, and in the media coverage of Algerian affairs, on this point and his rehabilitation of Boumedienne's industry minister, Belaid Abdessalem, is particularly welcome. He explains forcefully the coherence and far-sightedness of Abdessalem's industrialisation strategy and demonstrates in some detail the economic and social costs of the way in which it was sabotaged and eventually abandoned. The chapter on the Algerian economy in the 1980s ('The new economic policy and its implications') is much the best in the book; had the other chapters been of the same standard the book would have been considerably more worthwhile.

But even on this point Bennoune's analysis has severe limits. His explanation of why Boumedienne's strategy was sabotaged and abandoned relies heavily on a vulgar-Marxist thesis that the 'comprador bourgeoisie' and 'pro-comprador elements' in the regime were the villains of the piece. There is a fundamental problem with this theory, however, for Bennoune uses the term 'comprador' in an entirely slipshod way. As he himself observes, 'the new industrial bourgeoisie is strongly opposed to a Sadat-style opening of the national economy for multi-national firms' (p 270); it is therefore not properly to be described as 'comprador' at all, for this term properly denotes precisely those elements of the bourgeoisie which are the dependent agents of foreign capital.

Over and above this conceptual confusion, however, there is a fundamental lack of political lucidity. What Bennoune is unable to admit is that the ambitious strategy of Boumedienne and Abdessalem was premised upon political preconditions which could not be sustained. Bennoune rightly regards this strategy as having been socialist in character, but overlooks the fact that Algerian society was not prepared to support a definitive transition to a socialist system and that the FLN, being a coalition of interests and tendencies, could not afford to persist in this direction once it began to threaten its own internal unity. In other words, it is not necessary to postulate an all-powerful bourgeoisie (whether 'comprador' or not) nor to stigmatise the Algerian political leadership for its 'incompetence', 'anti-national tendencies' or 'mediocrity'—all charges which are conspicuously unargued by Bennoune. It is enough to recognise that, whatever its shortcomings, the Algerian political elite which emerged from the wartime FLN saw itself, with good reason, as the principal guarantor of the unity and integrity of the sovereign Algerian state, and was therefore bound to abandon a strategy, no matter how coherent and progressive in theory, once this strategy could no longer be sustained except at the expense of the unity of the elite itself.

Bennoune has every right to deplore the consequences of this abandonment, but is yet to understand the reasons for it. The making of contemporary Algeria has not been the work of economists, it has been above all a highly political affair, and Bennoune is very far from understanding—let alone explaining—the true character of Algerian politics. Yet it is the remarkable character of Algerian politics that has made possible the recent initiation of a transition to a pluralist democratic system in the wake of the riots of October 1988, a development which Bennoune failed—quite reasonably—to anticipate, but which would moreover be literally incredible and unintelligible were his own understanding of the Algerian state substantially correct. But then Bennoune

is only the latest in a long line of commentators to have mistaken the nature of contemporary Algeria.

One index of the remarkable nature of Algerian politics—and of the FLN in particular—has been the foreign policy pursued by the Algerian state since its accession to full sovereignty in 1962. As the very perceptive French commentator, Bruno Etienne, observed in 1977, 'Algiers's foreign policy presents characteristics which are unique in the Third World. First of all, it exists, which is not the least of things, and then it has been constant and heralded, defined, from the War of Liberation onwards. Numerous European states cannot offer such an example of continuity over twenty years' (*L'Algérie. Cultures et Révolution*, 1977, p 227).

This is indeed worth insisting on. The continuity and tenacious purposefulness of Algerian foreign policy has no equivalent (with the possible exception, since 1979, of revolutionary Iran) in the Third World, and very few elsewhere. To find counterparts one must look to Soviet and perhaps Chinese diplomacy. Both continuity and purposefulness have their origin in the Algerian revolution itself, and in the way in which this revolution, in forging the FLN, endowed the independent Algerian state with, among other things, a coherent, independent and combative orientation to the rest of the world and extremely effective articulators of this orientation in a seasoned but dynamic corps of young revolutionary diplomats. These had won their spurs between 1954 and 1962 and really began to get into their stride after 1965, once Boumedienne's consolidation of the FLN's state had made possible the elaboration of an external strategy which complemented the internal strategy of Belaid Abdessalem and Co.

All this is long overdue for scholarly treatment in an English-language work. Unfortunately, just as the making of contemporary Algeria remains as much of an enigma following the appearance of Bennoune's book as it was before it, so too Assassi Lassassi's contribution entirely fails to elucidate the development of Algeria's singular diplomacy.

There are several reasons for this. First, it is not, and does not pretend to be, an analysis of Algeria's foreign policy overall. Rather, it concentrates on one aspect of this, the Algerian commitment to a 'non-aligned' stance in international relations and the manner in which this commitment has been expressed in respect of four key issues: decolonisation, economic development, relations with the USA and the USSR, and the role and evolution of international organisations, especially the UN.

This concentration on one theme is perfectly reasonable. The problem with Lassassi's discussion is that it is not properly grounded in a thorough knowledge of the other aspects of Algerian foreign policy. Not only is there no discussion of Algerian policy towards its Maghrebi neighbours, the wider Arab world, or the wider Muslim world, or of the vexed question of Algeria's bilateral relations with France, and so on, but there is no understanding of how the commitment to non-alignment is to be related in practice as well as in theory to these other, and often far more immediate and crucial, preoccupations of Algerian foreign policy. To a very great extent the discussion of Algeria's non-alignment is an abstract one, disconnected from the greater part of its actual historical and policy context, and accordingly incapable of explaining either the whole or the part.

This failing is to a great extent a consequence of another, prior, shortcoming. For Lassassi's book is not really a contribution to the study of Algeria at all. First and foremost, it is a contribution to the theoretical literature of contemporary academic

international relations. Its point of departure is located not in Algerian foreign policy but in a dispute between contending academic schools. We are given to understand that there are three main approaches to the study of international relations: the 'power-politics' approach, the 'world society' approach and the 'global politics' approach. Lassassi emphatically rejects the first but appears to oscillate between the second and third. The main point, he argues, is that the 'power-politics' approach fails to give sufficient weight to the role of ideology in the determination of foreign policy. Far from being merely grounded in national interest (as the 'power-politics' school would apparently have it), Algeria's commitment to non-alignment expresses a major element of the ideology of the Algerian revolution. And this ideological factor is, he argues, an autonomous variable in the complex process of causation which underlies policy formation.

In other words, the discussion of Algeria's foreign policy in this book has the status of a case-study, and the force of little more than a debating point. The purpose which informs the argument is not to illuminate Algerian diplomacy, but to refute an academic school. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lassassi has virtually nothing to add to our understanding or knowledge of Algerian foreign policy. The later chapters just about pass muster as a summary account of Algeria's role in the non-aligned movement; they will do, at a pinch, for undergraduates taking courses in International Relations, and even the odd graduate. But they will be of no use whatever to specialists.

This is really a book which should not have been published at all. It is in fact Lassassi's MPhil thesis and, as such, it was no doubt worth the degree. But, being based very largely on secondary sources and uninformed by any serious knowledge of Algerian politics, as well as preoccupied with the essentially trivial matter of arbitrating between three equally simple-minded schools of academic thought, it contributes nothing of value to the serious study either of Algeria or of international relations. It is, moreover, like Bennoun's book, absolutely littered with typesetting errors, spelling and factual mistakes and mistranslations, and written in what is often broken English with an admixture of broken French (notably in the references to French-language sources).

One can only marvel at the effrontery of the publishers in demanding £26 for this book. It is a sad reflection on the state of contemporary academic life that they should assume that there is a market for it. Lassassi may well have it in him to produce interesting work in future, but he was ill-advised in publishing this book. And Algeria, in particular, deserves better.

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The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil 1964-85

Thomas E Skidmore

New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. 420pp. \$20.95/£22.50hb

Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone

Alfred C Stepan

Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1988. 167pp. £13.90hb/£5.60pb

Brazil's Economic and Political Future

Edited by Julian M Chacel, Pamela S Falk and David V Fleischer

Boulder, Colorado/London: Westview Press. 1988. 287pp. £26.00hb

These three books, from sharply differing perspectives, share a common theme. What has been the pattern of political development in Brazil since 1964, how is it now changing, and what may be expected in the future?

Skidmore's lengthy study, as he emphasises in his Preface and in the last three words of the text, is conceived as a sequel to his path-breaking account of Brazilian politics, published in 1967, which began as an attempt to explain the coup of 1964, but was forced to explore its historical roots, stretching back, at least, to 1930. The continuities rather than the ruptures of Brazil's political history are also the leitmotiv of *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil*, reflecting an awareness that surface changes often cover, or deliberately mask, the persistence of class, group, or even individual interest. One may quibble, on the other hand, with his repeated use of the term, an 'experiment with democracy', his closing words. Both before 1964 and since 1985 the Brazilian experience has been much more than an 'experiment'.

As always, his text is carefully documented, with detailed notes and references which provide an invaluable bibliographic essay. His account of the military regime and the emergence of the 'New Republic' is clear and coherent, incorporating the best of recent research. He is properly sensitive, for instance, to Castello Branco's attempt to avoid right-wing military extremism. He acknowledges Costa e Silva's attempts to 'humanise the Revolution', and stresses the importance of the carrot, as well as the stick, in the Médici years. He relates the struggle between Golbery do Couto e Silva and Delfim, and its importance for *abertura*, and he ends by assessing the difficulties facing the 'New Republic' in the wake of the 'Cruzado Plan'.

At the same time, there is a certain blandness in Skidmore's analysis, and a disturbing detachment in, for instance, his account of the torture and abuses of the Médici regime. The government, he says, 'came out ahead- on its terms. Rapid economic growth worked. Government propaganda worked. Repression worked. Censorship worked . . .' (p 107). Yes, but worked for whom, and at what cost? The carrot was for the middle classes and the privileged. For most Brazilians the stick was heavy, hard and often resorted to.

One of Skidmore's chapters is entitled 'Geisel: toward Abertura'. His chapter on the Figueiredo administration is 'The Twilight of Military Government'. The first is the more apt description. With Geisel, and still after him, the impulse *towards* full democracy was always to be gradual, slow and, above all, 'secure'. Democracy had to be 'relative', and controlled. The military twilight, on the other hand, begs a question. There is not much twilight in Brazil: the sun shines, or it drops.

The power of the armed forces, as Alfred Stepan shows all too clearly in *Rethinking Military Politics*, has not yet sunk below the political horizon. Starting with Weber, he moves briskly back to Aristotle, then offers his own distinction between 'civil' and 'political' society and its relation to the state, acknowledging his disagreement with Gramsci, Locke, Rousseau and, more recently, Cardoso and Welfort. This is heady, if mixed, company and the opening chapter is something of a *jeu d'esprit*: its conclusion is unexceptionable, that politics is about power, that the state has a coercive role, and

that power relationships change, as in the transition from military-led authoritarianism to more democratic government.

The strength of the book lies in its analysis of the Brazilian intelligence system, and the splits within it which quickened the move towards more open government, as well as of continuing disagreements among the military establishment right up to, and, of course, since, the start of the 'New Republic'. The study is not just of Brazil, but of the 'Southern Cone' more generally. Simply in terms of Brazil, however, it is a most valuable contribution to our understanding of the persistent importance of the armed forces and of the parallel system of power operating within the intelligence community. Stepan brings us up to date, for example, with the thinking of the *ESG* (*Escola Superior de Guerra*) on Brazilian democracy, as witnessed in the end-of-year graduation exercise in 1981 (p 51), where he also, wisely, notes the subjects which were not discussed, the non-issues, the eloquent silence on, for instance, the National Security Law, or even direct presidential elections. This is a slim book, but full of common sense and hard information, leaving, as it should, harder questions open.

Some of these questions are also addressed in *Brazil's Economic and Political Future*, edited by Chacel, Falk and Fleischer, but in a jerky, stop-start manner, which is unavoidable in a collection which tries to compress twenty-six, or more, essays into rather less than three hundred pages. The attempt to get a gallon into a pint pot only leaves the reader thirsty, as João Sayad is allotted eight pages on the Stabilisation Plan, Sérgio Corrêa da Costa only four on Brazil and the Banks, and Olavo Setubal seven on Brazil's foreign policy in the 'New Republic'. On the other hand, it is remarkably comprehensive in terms of the subjects covered, and refreshing in its mix of contributors, embracing politicians and policy-makers as well as academics. It leaves the reader wanting more.

In all these hundreds of pages there is one voice which is not heard, one contributor whose silence is also eloquent, whose lack of power is resonant. We hear nothing from, and little of, the mass of Brazilian people, whose suffering has been such a feature of Brazil's history since 1964, and who are still, under the 'New Republic', with its armed forces, intelligence services and elitist politicians, waiting to speak. These studies could not, of course, take note of the municipal elections of November 1988. Perhaps another chapter is opening.

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Oil and Mexican Foreign Policy

George W Grayson

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1988. 207pp. \$19.95hb

Grayson's *Oil and Mexican Foreign Policy* can perhaps be viewed as a sequel to his earlier *The Politics of Mexican Oil* (1981) which was written at the height of the oil boom. Any reader who has read the earlier volume will not be disappointed with the later one. The book is well researched; it contains a good deal of information, is generally reliable and is much broader in scope than the title might indicate. Whereas *The*

Politics of Mexican Oil was rather heavily weighted towards interviews and polemical in its treatment of some issues, *Oil and Mexican Foreign Policy* is based more on publicly-available material on the public record and achieves a better balance generally. It is a serious work and a definitive reference for the issues which it discusses.

When the oil boom developed in the late 1970s the Lopez Portillo government used oil money, and the reputational power which oil also conferred, to adopt a very active foreign policy. Lopez Portillo actively supported the Sandinista revolt in Nicaragua and the early stages of the Sandinista government. He felt confident enough to rebuke US President Carter on his ill-fated visit to Mexico in 1979 and to act in other ways which were unhelpful to US interests. Mexico also joined Venezuela in a policy devoted to providing financial help to the oil importing countries of Central America and the Caribbean. This policy was not wholly successful in that Mexico's aspirations for Third World leadership were set back by the distrust of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC): OPEC saw a threat to its own position from continuously-increasing Mexican oil production.

After the Mexican economy went into crisis in 1982, however, Mexico's foreign policy went into reverse. This policy reversal was slower and more partial than the original expansionism had been and it was clearly governed by financial constraints. Mexican spokesmen continued to support the Sandinistas in Nicaragua but less and less aid became available. The San José accord was never formally scrapped but its value decreased for recipient countries. Mexico tried to align itself more directly with OPEC, but looked after its own interests first when oil prices crashed in 1986. The de la Madrid government, while trying to maintain some independence, also became far more friendly towards (and dependent upon) the USA.

Grayson's chapter on the running of Pemex under de la Madrid is handicapped by the fact that not very much happened during this *sexenio*; far more occurred under Lopez Portillo and in the first few months of the Salinas administration. However, Grayson is good on the labour management conflicts of the period and on the high costs which de la Madrid paid for avoiding an early conflict with the oil workers. One looks forward to a sequel in due course, on the fall of the oil workers' leader, La Quina.

GEORGE PHILIP

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The Eagle and the Lion: the tragedy of American-Iranian relations

James A Bill

New Haven/London: Yale University Press. 1988. 520pp. £16.95hb

Iran and the United States: a Cold War case study

Richard W Cottam

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1988. 298pp. \$29.95hb/\$12.95pb

When the USA first became seriously involved with Iran in the 1940s, it was seen by

the Iranians in the role of a protective and generous big brother against the evil Russians and colonialist British. Within a decade, the CIA had teamed up with British intelligence to overthrow the first popular Iranian government of this century. In subsequent years, the USA became an integral part of the Shah's rule—and repressive apparatus—unwittingly contributing to his downfall and earning the enmity of the Islamic revolutionaries in Tehran.

In *The Eagle and the Lion* and *Iran and the United States*, James Bill and Richard Cottam analyse the stormy relationship between the two countries with the benefit of documents that have become available only in recent years. The relationship having reached a *dénouement*, they are also the beneficiaries of a good deal of hindsight—though both writers were admittedly among the few scholars to forewarn their government of the likelihood of a crisis.

The Eagle and the Lion is an angry account of the USA's blunders and misconceptions in its relations with Iran, aggravated by individuals and groups with special interests, and by an abnormal fear of Soviet influence. Though Bill's tone sometimes lapses into moralising, it is backed by an impressive body of original research. He is particularly effective in showing how successive administrations in Washington allowed themselves to become entrapped by the Shah into ever greater support, despite the strong reservation of experienced diplomats. Even John F Kennedy, who set out to reform the Shah's unstable regime, became a victim of this tendency.

The book's strongest criticisms are, however, reserved for Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. The two men had a particular affinity for the Shah and gave him *carte blanche* in 1972 to buy unlimited weaponry from the US arsenal. Before Nixon, the Shah had been kept on a relatively short leash, but the open invitation paved the way for the Shah to indulge himself to the point of financial and political bankruptcy.

Bill also documents at length the special relationship between the Shah and the Rockefellers, whose Chase Manhattan Bank played a key role in Iran and Washington. The bank went beyond the call of duty in approving syndicated loans to Iran until the last moment before the revolution, and became the first to declare Iran in default after the Shah was overthrown. So anxious was the bank to declare default and seize Iran's deposits that it effectively sidetracked Iranian efforts to pay an interest instalment: other banks in the syndicate who followed the lead of Chase Manhattan were not informed in time of the Iranian central bank telex clearing the interest payment.

Bill's account of the ups and downs in the USA's relationship with Iran sometimes veers towards the frenetic, and may tax the reader. He also appears to underestimate the importance of the Shah's vacillating character for his handling of the revolution. *The Eagle and the Lion* is none the less one of the best books on the subject, and will be an invaluable tool for researchers.

Cottam's *Iran and the United States* is perhaps more elegantly written, but also more conceptual and ultimately less readable. He covers much the same ground as Bill, mostly from the perspective of Iran as a Cold War battleground. Cold War attitudes between West and East were set in place during the 1946 Azarbaijan crisis when the Soviet Union refused to withdraw its wartime occupation troops by the deadline of 2 March 1946. The crisis also became the first major case to be handled by the newly-created United Nations. Cottam argues that far from being aggressive, the Soviet Union's behaviour in the crisis was 'sluggish' and reactive. Stalin's motives for supporting regional autonomous movements in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan were unclear, and

certainly much more complex than the straightforward territorial expansionism attributed to him. The hawks in Washington were to thrive on the crisis, reinforced in their view that Moscow was determined to conquer the world and that only an aggressive US policy could prevent it. President Truman was even to claim belatedly that the Soviet Union had abandoned its ambitions in Iran under the threat of a US nuclear attack—a contention which no historian has been able to substantiate.

The 'Soviet threat' was a constant in US policy in Iran for the next three decades, justifying unquestioning support of the Shah and his bloated military. It was also the central theme in the anti-Mossadeq coup of 1953 when the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party made an informal alliance with the Mossadeq nationalists. In one of those little-known historical ironies, Cottam, who worked with the US embassy in Tehran after the coup, discloses how the CIA paid its Iranian agents to bolster the Tudeh mobs in order to frighten the population with the spectre of a communist takeover. At a critical moment during the coup, when the royalists were on the retreat, these agents attacked religious leaders and mosques. Given Mossadeq's dependence on religious crowds for street support, the ploy was an important factor in isolating and overthrowing him. It was perhaps not inappropriate that during the 1978-79 revolution, many US officials, as well as Iranian royalists should have distracted themselves with the perceived threat from Iran's northern neighbour, while Muslim demonstrators took over the streets of Tehran and brought the Shah's mighty military machine to its knees.

Cottam also devotes a fascinating few pages to Sadeq Qotbzadeh, Khomeini's foreign minister during the US embassy hostage crisis of 1979-81. Cottam, who was close to Qotbzadeh and in frequent touch with him during the crisis, confirms long-standing suspicions that Qotbzadeh was in effect conspiring with the Carter administration to mislead Khomeini in order to extract an early order to free the hostages. President Carter, without fully understanding the equation, went along with the maverick foreign minister for several months. This miscalculation led to the abortive hostage rescue operation in April 1980 which was born out of frustration, and ended in one of the more humiliating episodes in US history.

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London

Political Power and the Arab Oil Weapon: the experience of five industrial nations

Roy Licklider

Berkeley, California: University of California Press. 1988. 343pp. hb/np

The first oil shock has generated a literature so extensive that it may seem unlikely that there are neglected aspects of it requiring further analysis. Roy Licklider's book, however, shows the inadequacy of the way that the 1973 oil embargo is often discussed. Most analysis is directed towards the economic consequences of price rises. The deployment of the oil weapon was intended, however, as a foreign policy tool, aimed at changing the attitudes of industrialised countries to the Arab-Israeli dispute. Analysis of the success or failure of this specific aim has often got lost in the ensuing discussion of the trauma of major economic adjustment.

Licklider's project is to inject some detail into the rather hazy notion of Arab petro-power. He starts by pointing out that the prospects for the success of the oil weapon looked good: the Arab governments were asking only for a rhetorical change from consumers, and they had at their disposal a particularly potent commodity. The prospect of a group of developing countries taking control of their own resources and employing them to change the foreign policies of the industrialised world signalled the possibility of a fundamental change in the nature of the international system.

The problem in assessing the effectiveness of the oil weapon is that we do not know how foreign policy stances would have developed if the weapon had not been deployed. It is therefore difficult to establish a valid way of testing for its effects. In these circumstances, Licklider makes the best attempt available. He takes five industrialised nations—Japan, Holland, the UK, Canada and the USA—and provides a detailed case study of the changing position of each. The choice of these five countries is good, providing as wide as possible a range of different circumstances. Making case studies the core of the book has a sound methodological attraction. So much international relations literature starts by establishing a theoretical framework of such Byzantine complexity that authors then sit back, and, mesmerised by the beauty of their own theoretical grand design, attempt half-heartedly to fit in the inconvenient and messy facts. Licklider's study works the other way: he is interested to see whether what actually happened can be used to generate and sustain any wider propositions about the nature of the influence of states on each other.

The five case study chapters are impressive examples of how diplomatic history can be written in an interesting way. Moreover, the depth of Licklider's research gives these chapters particular authority: his personal conversations with staff in foreign ministries, and careful sifting of the evidence, provide useful insights into the manoeuvres that make up the foreign policy process.

In terms of providing an audit of the impact of the oil weapon, the book offers a rather uneven balance sheet. There were various changes in foreign policy positions, but no comprehensive theory of economic sanctions seems to emerge that can account for the response of industrialised nations to the oil weapon. It does not seem, for example, that the more vulnerable states moved their diplomatic stances more radically or more swiftly than their less oil dependent counterparts, or that policy changes can always be explained as responses to the oil weapon. A major problem for Arab producers was their lack of downstream control. Rather than the oil weapon operating as a finely tuned selective supply instrument, it led to a general reduction in volumes with price effects to match. The oil weapon failed to punish the embargoed or reward the unembargoed. Everybody just had to pay more for their oil.

Important changes in power relationships may have resulted from this fact. The transfer of income from consumers to producers, and the accrual of petro-dollars, waiting to be recycled, may have been more important in providing the driving force behind changes in the nature of international relationships, than the rather imprecise oil weapon. Perhaps Licklider was being slightly misleading in describing the oil weapon as an economic sanction that made its deployers rich. The oil weapon was the midwife of price rises, rather than their fundamental progenitor. Whilst it caused prices to rise more dramatically and more quickly than they would otherwise have done, the ability of the oil weapon to work at all depended on the change in market fundamentals that had taken place between 1969 and 1973: without the embargo, the market was tighten-

ing, and the death of excess capacity would anyway have led to a massive transfer of income from consumers to producers, and some of the consequent changes in the international political context. In occasional passages, Licklider should therefore have been clearer about disentangling changes that sprang directly from the application of the oil weapon, from those that were a function of wider changes in market conditions: after all, in a sense, this distinction is a *raison d'être* of the book.

Licklider's book gives a strong sense of the way in which the oil weapon changed the psychological climate of international relations. A new emphasis on economic interdependence and North-South relations was fostered by the dramatic move of imposing an embargo which, unlike the previous occasions of its use, was employed in the context of a steadily tightening market. This was the transition from the age of innocence to the age of experience in the international political economy, a painful rite of passage that consumers had vaguely anticipated but never imagined the full force of. Licklider's book provides impressive and high quality analysis in an area which deserved some concerted attention.

MARK ATTEW

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A History of Islamic Societies

Ira M Lapidus

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 1002pp. £35.00/\$42.50hb

This book is a major undertaking and deserves to be saluted as an outstanding achievement. Professor Lapidus' *A History of Islamic Societies* belongs to a rare breed of works which appear only once every two decades. On Islam, there are few precedents in this century that have required so much work by an individual scholar. Rare is the tradition of scholars of such comprehensive scope as the German, Brockelmann, the Egyptian, Ahmad Amin, and, in English, Marshall Hodgson and his celebrated three-volume work on the *Venture of Islam*.

The distinguishing feature of encyclopedic works carried out single-handedly, as opposed to the more current team enterprise, is the permeation of a unifying method and style. This does not mean, however, that *A History of Islamic Societies* has not been carefully subjected to the review and advice of specialists in narrower fields. The work is abreast of the latest developments in Western scholarship on particular Islamic topics. The case of Islam is particularly challenging in terms of the variety of subjects which it embraces. Both the intricate motion of the expansion of Islam, and the multiple layers in a given society as it takes root as a civilisation of *ideas*, warrant special care for the analyst.

In terms of Islam as a civilisation of ideas, Lapidus has succeeded in conveying a flavour of the various adventures and forays of Islamic thought. Sufism, Shi'ism, schools of law, and even strands of literary and architectural achievements which can generally be described as Islamic have been covered by the book. In its analysis of Islam as a worldwide civilisation of political and institutional societies, which dates back in history over fourteen centuries, and has expanded to encompass a geographical

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area with significant population density, the book has managed to retain both depth and width. The way in which the history of Islam is seen to unfold to cover systematically its various constitutive worlds is impressive.

To such an effort, there is a drawback. A less detailed account in terms of dates and names may perhaps have been preferable, with a more consistent analytical and abstract effort at unification. To the credit of Lapidus, the reader who sets out to discover the early development of Islam in Africa, or the intricacies of the Moghul empire, will emerge from these chapters with the requisite sense of edification. Lapidus' care for detail shows in the texture of the individual chapters. But the reader of the book as a whole might have preferred to have been spared some of the details, which in the course of a thousand pages, cannot realistically be assimilated, and to pursue instead the thread of the unifying theme. The expository framework, as Lapidus calls it, tends to obscure the discernment of typically Islamic features within each of the Islamic societies under review.

None the less, this book is a masterly endeavour, which is highly rewarding to the patient reader.

CHIBLI MALLAT

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Art of the South African Townships

Edited by Gavin Younge

London: Thames & Hudson. 1988. 96pp. £6.95pb

Echoes of African Art

Edited by Matsemela Manaka

Braamfontein: Skotaville. 1987. 110pp. R47hb

Now and again, books appear which seem to fill an unexpected void. Everybody knows, for instance, of the cave-art of the San people, or has seen examples of the traditional art of the Zulu and Ndebele, amongst others. Some art lovers know, or have heard of sculptors such as Sidney Kumalo and Pitika Ntuli, painters such as Gerard Sekoto, Peter Clarke, David Koloane and Helen Sebidi, graphic artists such as Gavin Jantjes, Dumile Feni, Lefifi Tladi, Fikile, Bongiwe Dhlomo and Thami Mnyele. But how many of us know of the work of the many other talented African artists? The recently published books of Gavin Younge and Matsemela Manaka will therefore serve as eye-openers for a wide public—not only for people interested in African art.

Art of the South African Townships is definitely more than a traditional art book. Strongly documented, with striking photography and a very readable text, it throws light on the multifarious aspects of the art which has sprung up in the South African townships, particularly since 1980. He explains the origins of the townships themselves, and the intensity of life and experiences both under and against oppression, and

examines in the process the relationship between individuals and the community at large. He also demonstrates the interaction taking place between the townships and the rural areas because of the constant shuttle of migrant workers to and from the peri-urban areas.

What makes this superbly illustrated book (134 reproductions, 100 of them in colour) so interesting are the many factors—historical, political, sociological and cultural—which the author evokes in the first three chapters in order to clarify and examine several important issues: the socio-economic context which determined the official creation and informal proliferation of the townships from the mid-1950s onwards; the absence of art training within the utilitarian-oriented Bantu education system; the rise of community projects aimed at filling the void; and the growing realisation that culture has always been, and is increasingly, part and parcel of the overall struggle. Gavin Younger is right to include a small sample of posters, banners and T-shirts, but the absence of cartoons and graffiti (with the exception of a painting by Peter Clarke (pp 78–9) which does include graffiti) shows that a full-length study of all the visual arts—including photography—will have to be undertaken. It is also interesting to note the importance in South African art assumed over the years by lino-cuttings. Given their relative accessibility, they are a powerful element in the current mobilisation and democratisation of culture.

While emphasising the many obstacles encountered by artists, professional and non-professional, Gavin Younger can nevertheless assert, and this is amply substantiated by the choice of the works presented in the book, that as a force for communication, these works of art hold their own amongst examples from anywhere in the world. This claim is also borne out in the second part of the book. Younger, who is a sculptor and an art critic in his own right, describes and comments upon the work of a number of artists whom he has visited and whose biographies he sketches briefly but efficiently. The feeling of closeness and intimacy with both artist and work is enhanced by his interviews with the artists and his examination of the work *in situ*. The book also comprises an index and a glossary of South African terms. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has written a foreword where he affirms that through art and creativity, blacks can transcend the claustrophobia of their environment. It is true that the works presented here do not only have utilitarian value or respond to political motivations alone. True, too, that the range of medium and style demonstrates the ingenuity, inventiveness and vision of artists who have sometimes not had the benefit of formal training. This leads Younger to raise the problem of the merits and demerits of home against foreign patronage, and to reflect on the fact that most galleries are situated in the city centres, thus catering to a mainly white clientele, which, he remarks, will favour what it thinks is 'authentic' (read 'native') African art. The repercussions which this patronage may have on some of the local artists, such as Seoka's mass production, where the borderline between art and curios has disappeared, substantiate Manaka's remark in *Echoes of African Art* that in certain cases the creative mode is determined by the consumer.

Another interesting issue is raised by Gavin Younger's remark that David Koloane has re-introduced the figure into his layered surface in 'Workers', 'in deference to the current debate among black artists as to whether abstraction is relevant to black experience or not'. Is social realism, then, the only acceptable form in a pre-revolutionary situation? John Berger has examined the issue of 'socialist naturalism' disguised, he said, as 'socialist realism' in his seminal book, *Art and Revolution: Ernst Neizvestny and*

the role of the artist in the USSR (1969), and warned against the dangers that political dictates may pose for the artist, by attempting to iron out the ambiguities which are part and parcel of the totality of experience.

Echoes of African Art is, as its title shows, more ambitious and larger in scope. Manaka aims to demonstrate the relationship between the arts in Southern Africa and those of other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. He also aims to show the continuity over the centuries of the African character as it expresses itself in various forms of art. This is emphasised in the lengthy introduction cum manifesto which precedes the illustrations, themselves grouped according to genre: traditional art, sculpture, paintings and graphic arts in general. If Manaka falls short of his own objectives, it is probably because he is attempting to be over-embracing while at the same time failing to include enough examples that are relevant to his original purpose-- at least as far as the rest of Africa is concerned. Yet the eclecticism, the variety and quality of the work he has chosen to present, already show the richness of Black South African art.

It is significant that the painting and graphic arts section should begin and end with George Pemba, born in 1913 and, when Manaka interviewed him in 1986, still painting. The 'Portrait of a Xhosa poet', a watercolour dated 1939, is as impressive as the oil-on-board painting entitled 'Pandemonia' which, though not dated, must be recent. Where in the first instance the composure and pride of the poet are emphasised by its subject being shown with a tilt-shot, as from a camera, thus accentuating the heroic posture of a man in full regalia, 'Pandemonia' captures the moment of panic of an African crowd presumably attending a memorial service in a church which has just been tear-gassed. Here the dynamic treatment, the multiplicity of attitudes and people seen running towards the entrance is a good example by the same artist, but some fifty years later, of photographic reportage, and a truthful testimony on the violence of repression. One would have liked to see more of the early painters, such as Benghu, Sekota and Mohl, under whom Helen Sebidi studied. Her oil-on-board painting, 'Women at Work' (undated), probably belongs to the second stage in her career. She is one of the few women artists included in the volume, together with Noria Mabasa and Bongiwé Dhlomo whose woodcuts suffer from poor reproduction. The same fate befalls Motshile wa Nthodi's woodcut, originally two-tone (black and red) here reproduced only in black. Despite the reduction in size of several works which originally appeared in *Staff-rider* (references to the publication are unfortunately absent), most of the 150-odd works are lavishly reproduced. Their variety and eclecticism, although more could have been shown of the Community Arts Project, is striking and contradicts in a way the emphasis laid on the pan-Africanist trend perceptible in the introduction. It is no secret that Matsemela Manaka, who is a gifted artist, a poet, a prolific playwright and a cultural worker, is close to the Black Consciousness Movement.

But the emphasis on black art suggests the possible limitations of Manaka's book, at last in terms of the scope implied by its title. For, if one accepts his assertion that some white artists have begun their search for an African identity, and that several, including Gavin Younge, have responded to their social environment, then surely the works by artists such as Manfred Zylla, Paul Stopforth, Cecil Skotnes, Catherine Cullinan, Wopko Jensma, to name but a few, should have been included. This is particularly so if one considers that some of the works presented here display techniques which are generally associated with surrealism, expressionism and other schools or movements. Only the names of their authors betray their Africanness. Es'kia Mphahlele, who has

also written a foreword to the book, is quoted as saying 'We are not only in Africa but also of it' (p 17). Can one then not speak of 'white Africans'?

There are, none the less, some quite convincing examples of that kinship which still exists today all over Africa. Particularly revealing in this respect are the masks from Swaziland and Malawi (reproduced on pages 84-6), together with a painting, probably a mural, from Senegal, which show striking similarities with three drawings and paintings from South Africa, two of them probably also murals. The author does not in fact mention anywhere the size of the works reproduced, nor, with few exceptions, the material used by the artist. Thus a sculpture by Sidney Kumalo, simply entitled 'The Blessing' can only be identified because it also figures in *Art of the South African Townships*. Younge describes it as 'cast bronze', although he also fails to give the dimensions of works, and the imposing stature of Kumalo's sculpture can only be assessed because it has been photographed *in situ*.

Despite these shortcomings, and also the absence of a much needed index and table of contents in *Echoes of African Art*, there is no doubt that Manaka has succeeded in producing a brilliant testimony to the variety and quality of black art. His book, like Gavin Younge's, will have to be supplemented at a later stage by monographs of other individual artists, but it provides as it is a more than useful complement to *Art of the South African Townships*.

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Erratum

In Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud's Literary Profile of Naguib Mahfouz, in the April 1989 issue of *Third World Quarterly* 11(2), the literal translation of the place names which form the titles of volumes I and II of Mahfouz's *Trilogy* should be 'Between the two palaces' for *Bein el-Qasrein* and 'The palace of desire' for *Qasr al-Shoaq*, rather than as given (pp 159-60).

Third World Quarterly regrets this error.

Ethnic revival: perspectives on state and society

There has been an ethnic revival since the 1960s in the sense both of an increased incidence of ethnic conflict, and an increased awareness of the phenomenon by social scientists. This is reflected in the large and flourishing literature specialising in the examination of ethnicity and such related topics as nationalism and race relations. But there has hitherto been no corresponding awareness of the centrality of ethnicity to the study of development, and the literature on ethnicity has been regarded as peripheral to the mainstream of development studies. It comes as something of a shock to realise just how little attention is still paid to ethnicity in most of the theoretical work that has been done on political change; and it is still difficult to locate a major work on the politics of development that bothers to devote a chapter to this topic. Walker Connor's 1972 criticism of the 'nation-building' theorists then dominant, still applies to their successors: '[Such] scholars ... have tended either to ignore the question of ethnic diversity or to treat the matter of ethnic identity superficially as merely one of a number of minor impediments to effective state-integration'.¹ If ethnicity is indeed a significant aspect of politics in a large number of states, then how are we to begin explaining why it has been given little serious attention in attempts to construct theoretical explanations of political change?

Walker Connor put forward one explanation for this. He initially outlined twelve separate factors, but each of these (and also four of the five additional reasons that he has subsequently added) are directly related to the central point that political science was dominated, from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, by the modernisation paradigm, in which ethnicity was depicted as a remnant of tradition inevitably declining in significance as cultural rationality and national integration developed.² As long as political change was depicted as a process of transition to modernisation, however erratic and problematical that process was, then ethnicity seemed to be both a marginal and a temporary feature of politics.

Had the dominance of modernisation theories been the only impediment to the neglect of ethnicity, then the early 1970s would have seen the resolution of the problem. This did not happen, because, with the

decline in modernisation theories, the focus of study for those interested in examining the 'ethnic revival' remained markedly different from the issues that preoccupied political development theorists. Dependency theories stressed the impact upon politics of international capitalism, and neo-Marxist theories stressed the impact of the class structure. The 'policy studies' approach tended to focus, for its part, on the decision-making process within the governing elites. So, in various ways, the roles of ethnicity and culture were relegated to the status of epiphenomena. Students of ethnic politics, for their part, continued to define ethnicity, until the mid-1970s, in terms of the cultural 'givens' of language, race and religion.

Thus, while those in one field of study (ethnicity) were seeing culture as the base upon which to build their analysis, those in the other (development studies), including the non-Marxists, were coming to regard it merely as part of the 'superstructure'. Such a disparity of focus ensured the continued marginality of ethnic studies to studies of political development. This situation was not fundamentally changed by the developments that occurred in ethnic studies during the mid-1970s.

Writers such as Nelson Kasfir, Crawford Young and Dov Ronen helped to shift attention away from the cultural attributes of society, and towards the 'situational' factors that influenced the salience or otherwise of cultural distinctions.³ Rather than ethnicity being perceived as itself providing a cultural explanation for politics, as was previously the case, it was now being argued that ethnicity itself needed to be explained; and to be explained in terms of factors other than culture. The causes of ethnic conflict were thus seen to lie, for example, in the mobilisation activities of manipulative elites, or in the economic disparities between regions and communities. Ethnicity itself was not apparently a cause, but rather a consequence, of change in the social, economic and political arenas.

This insight did much to enliven studies of ethnic politics; but it provided yet another reason why this study should remain peripheral to the search for explanations of political change. How could ethnicity be central to such a search when it was itself apparently a variable to be explained in terms of other factors? Ethnicity might be significant as a consequence of change in other areas, or as the clothing, the outward manifestation, of economic or political developments; but it could not itself be regarded, apparently, as a primary engine of change.

These shifts in the focus of both ethnic studies and political develop-

ment studies did not, therefore, contribute to any real appreciation of the role of ethnicity in the process of political change. There is also a further factor that has sustained this situation. Political scientists concerned with development have not been immune from a general perception that the study of the causes of ethnic conflict is not really a fruitful area for research, since the very proliferation of such conflict indicates that it is indeed a natural phenomenon with, presumably, a simple, common-sense explanation. Why waste valuable time on careful analysis of something which is obvious? Ethnic conflict appears to be most simply explainable in terms of a natural tendency towards ethno-centrism: people seem to trust and prefer those of their own cultural group, while feeling more distant from, and distrustful of, those of other cultural groups. It is thus surely to be expected that societies made up of markedly different cultural communities should have problems in managing their inter-group relations. Since most societies are multi-cultural, then ethnic conflict of one sort or another is likely to be the norm. This 'common-sense' view of ethnicity has probably been somewhat eroded by the research which has proliferated on ethnic politics, but its influence can still be seen in the cavalier treatment that ethnicity continues to receive in political science.

There are signs of change, however. In the last few years several works have appeared indicating some shifts of focus, both in the field of ethnic studies, and in the wider field of political development studies. For the first time, there appears to be some convergence of interests. In political development studies, dependency theories were useful in providing a macro-explanation of why Third World countries continued to experience economic dependence, political instability and authoritarian rule. But such theories were clearly less useful in explaining the specific variety of politics in different dependent states, and the apparent ability of some states, the newly industrialising countries (NICs) such as South Korea and Taiwan, to escape the dependency trap and to develop state strategies and structures capable of generating economic transformation while maintaining political stability. How is this to be explained? Two types of explanations have recently been put forward. Either the state in NICs must have more autonomy from social and economic forces than had previously been thought; or some societies must provide cultural environments more conducive to developmental political change than others. These two areas—culture and the state—are consequently the ones now seen to be most deserving of further study.

At first glance they would seem to constitute two distinct and indeed incompatible approaches. Either we see the structure and character of the state as the starting point for an explanation of development, presumably inclusive of the cultural component involving some form of national integration; or we take as our starting point the examination of the cultural values and attitudes prevalent in society and the impact of these upon the functioning of the state, the behaviour of state elites, and their development policies.

But political scientists are now far too aware of the limitations of mono-causal, deterministic and unilinear explanations of development to be willing to see the issue in such dichotomous terms. The nature of development is seen to be too complex for that.

Studies of development must seek to explain the kind of environmental factors (cultural as well as international, economic, class etc) which act to constrain the autonomy of the state, to limit the options and the capabilities of state elites. It must also explain the factors influencing the way in which such elites do employ their limited autonomy, including their cultural perceptions and preconceptions. Looked at from the viewpoint of culture, the aim is, therefore: 'A theory of cultural preferences, one that is not deterministic but rather enables us to understand why the menus from which (state) choices are made differ and why various groups within cultures prefer one set of choices over others.'⁴ Looked at from the point of view of students of the character of the state, the task appears to be one of explaining both the genesis and the impact of particular state structures, characterised in terms of their organisational structure and of the class, cultural and ideological composition of the state elites.

If the study of political change is indeed shifting towards a focus on the role of culture and on the character of the state, then the implication is that the study of ethnicity will indeed become of central concern. Moreover, it is not only studies of development that have been shifting their focus. The literature on ethnic politics has also been moving in ways that make it more immediately relevant to the issue of development; indeed, by a rather different route, ethnicity is now being examined in terms of the relationship between culture and the state, in ways that are remarkably similar to those cropping up in mainstream development studies. In order to see the implications of this, we must examine the more recent discussions of the nature of ethnicity; first in terms of its relationship with culture, and then with the state.

Ethnicity and culture

Culture undoubtedly plays an important role in shaping ethnicity. The traditional approach to an understanding of ethnicity was, as has been indicated, to define it in terms of the objective cultural structure of society; to see ethnic consciousness as arising directly out of the possession, by a group, of a particular and distinctive language or religion, or 'racial' phenotype. This view of ethnicity connects with the widespread assumptions that language carries with it cultural connotations; that religious values carry over into the values and attitudes underlying wider social and political behaviour; and that the sharing of common genes engenders feelings of communal identity. It was thus to be expected that communities possessing distinctive religious, linguistic or racial attributes, and common histories, would develop a corresponding group consciousness: that those of the Sikh religion, for example, would 'naturally' tend towards Punjabi nationalism.

It was recognised early on, however, that such an explanation of ethnicity in terms of objective cultural attributes was vulnerable to the simple observation that not all 'objective' cultural groups developed strong group consciousness; and that indeed some groups appeared to have developed rather strong ethnic consciousness despite internal disparities of language, religion or race, which were obvious to all concerned; for example, the Moros of the Philippines or the 'Biafrans' of Nigeria.

The most common response to this was to rephrase the definition of ethnicity so that it focused on the existence of subjective consciousness as the key element. The argument appeared to be that 'objective' cultural groups might indeed remain for some time unaware of their common identity, so that their ethnic consciousness would remain latent. However, in line with notions of political development, it was usually argued that group identity and loyalty would tend to become manifest and conscious as social interactions with other groups increased, or as external threats arose. Nevertheless, the specific connection between the subjective and objective aspects of ethnicity remained rather unclear. Why did a related dialect or sect attain the status, in some cases, of a distinct language or religion? Why did some multi-cultural groups manage to come together in a 'melting pot' community, while in other cases groups separated by only minor objective distinctions (such as some of the rival Muslim sects in the Lebanon) indulged in mutual hostility?

The implication was that there was no simple deterministic relationship in which culture, on its own, caused ethnicity. The response of saying that it was the situational context, rather than the cultural givens, which determined ethnic consciousness, did indeed help explain the kind of variations noted above; but it was in turn vulnerable to the criticism that it crudely overstated the degree of flexibility of ethnic identities and, more importantly, that it failed to explain the particularly emotional and powerful appeal of ethnicity when compared (as it frequently has been) to other available affiliations such as class. Cultural affinities are certainly only one of several bases for political affiliation from which people may choose; but people rarely seem to perceive themselves as choosing their ethnic group; and, when compared to class, ethnicity appears to offer a more all-embracing and emotionally satisfying way of defining an individual's identity. If individuals do indeed often rally around cultural attributes as a set of symbols and myths that will generate and sustain their cultural identity, then what exactly is the appeal and power of such symbols?

Individuals may (and do) participate in politics on the basis of affiliation with groups based, for example, on gender, generation, ideology, class or ethnicity. There is no consensus amongst social scientists as to the criterion by which people choose their group affiliation; some stress the search for emotional security, some argue that the choice is made on rational grounds of utility in the search for access to desired resources; and some stress that it is usually the circumstances of people's lives which limit the options, so that individuals often have no real choice in their group affiliation. While accepting that each of these may hold in different circumstances, it seems likely that the attractiveness of a particular form of group affiliation will be highest if it appears to fulfil all these criteria: that an affiliation which appeared to offer both emotional security and interest satisfaction; and was based on a widely and easily available aspect of the social environment, would have a powerful and wide appeal.

The argument is, then, that ethnicity is particularly attractive as a basis for political affiliation because it fulfils all three criteria; and that it does this by replicating, in the public and adult world, the functions performed in the private and childhood environment by the family. The ethnic group is perceived by its members as a pseudo-kinship group, which promises to provide the all-embracing emotional security offered by the family to the child; which offers practical support, in the form of nepotism, such as the family gives to its members when they interact

with others; and which, precisely because it is based on the ubiquitous family and kinship ties, is widely and easily available for utilisation in politics.

This definition of ethnicity as a pseudo-kinship group has been widely adopted by recent writers on ethnic politics, because it appears both to get to the essence of how ethnic attachments are actually perceived by those involved, and because it explains the power, strength and appeal of such attachments.⁵

But the ethnic group is not a real kinship group; it is a fictive one. It must therefore, in the absence of real ties of common ancestry, display and propagate the myths and symbols of kinship. It must 'advertise' its claim to be the real thing. The most obvious symbolism of this kind involves the use of terms such as 'motherland', 'fatherland' and 'homeland' to refer to the territory which the community regards as its place of origin or of permanent settlement. The sense of common kinship is reinforced by historical myths which in some cases identify a common mythical ancestor from whom all members claim descent; or which indicate common ancestry rather less concretely by tracing the descent of the community from a specific historical people, or by describing a process of migration from a particular place of origin.⁶

In addition to the claim to common descent and history, the pseudo-kinship tie of ethnicity is strengthened by asserting the significance of the objective similarity of 'family' members. The affinities of language, religion, life-style or physiognomy can each be utilised as rallying points around which to articulate and mobilise the sense of ethnic identity. Thus it is not that the possession of common cultural attributes generate communal loyalty in themselves, but rather that these attributes provide outward manifestations and symbols with which to sustain the belief in common kinship.

It might well be, therefore, that an ethnic group may shift the focus of its symbolism from one cultural attribute to another over time, in line with shifts in perceptions of their relative utility in changing political circumstances. (This has happened, for example, with the Malays in Malaysia, who have shifted from a stress on racial criteria in defining their ethnic identity to a stress on the myth of territorial ownership [Bumiputra], and more recently, towards a stress on the possession of Islamic culture and religion.) Nevertheless, even though such shifts of symbolism may be possible, ethnic groups must clearly make use of the kind of myths and symbols which are available in the society: they are unlikely to be able to invent them from nothing. In this respect the real

cultural attributes of a society provide the limiting framework within which ethnic identities develop. The kind of linguistic, religious and racial variations in the society, and the kind of documented histories and oral traditions available, constitute the raw material which ethnicity must employ. Within those limits, however, the kind of communal rivalries which develop, and the choice by these groups of the myths and symbols of ethnicity, will depend upon the kind of threats to their emotional security and to their practical interests with which they are confronted in their political environments. If, therefore, we are to specify more clearly the process whereby ethnic groups are defined, we must begin to explain the patterns of security threats and interest options which develop in society. We must, then, turn to a discussion of the role of the state in society.

Ethnicity and the state

The situationalist approach had suggested that communal identities were shaped by the situational context within which communities found themselves. More specifically, it was argued that when groups found themselves under situations of threat from a 'dominant other' they reacted defensively by rallying around a new form of communal identity. This reactive communal identity was chosen so as to be a mirror-image reflection of the identity of the dominant other, and so as to provide a suitable basis for emotional, and often physical, defence. Thus, for example, the notion of Shan identity in Burma can only be made sense of if it is understood as asserting an identity *vis à vis* Burman dominance.⁷

Such a view of ethnicity seems to indicate a focus on the role of the state in shaping ethnic identities. This is because one of the most widespread and obvious features of the Third World since World War II has been the expansion of the state, in terms both of the spatial and the policy range of its activities. Regimes which formerly attained only spasmodic and limited control outside their core regions and capital cities have sought increasingly systematic control over peripheral regions through the expansion of their administrative bureaucracies, armies and educational systems. At the same time, the range of governmental interference has expanded beyond the concern with raising revenue and maintaining order, as the need to direct, train and motivate labour has increased.⁸

It is important to note that this observation of the expansion of the

state has been interpreted in different ways. For some, the state has been depicted as the non-autonomous agency ('organising committee') of international capital or of a particular social sector designated as a class, elite or ethnic group; the expansion of the state being seen here as deriving from the attempts of the designated social or economic group to extend their power and interests in the society.

Alternatively, it has been argued, most obviously in the neo-marxist literature on the state, that the state possesses some degree of 'relative autonomy' whereby the imperatives of statehood lie behind the expansion of bureaucratic and ideological control over society. From this perspective, it is the state bureaucracies that seek to expand their influence, not so much from self-interest *per se*, but more from the necessary concern of the state, and especially the new post-colonial state, to seek the order, national cohesion and economic development necessary to secure the preservation of the system. It is not just the contemporary neo-marxists who perceive the state in this way. The characterisation of state autonomy has noticeable similarities with the earlier image of the state advanced by the 'modernisation school', which perceived a tendency towards the emergence of educated bureaucratic and political elites propelled by the concern to pursue the modernisation of the state; and which thus stood in some sense outside or above society.

These debates about the character of the state, and thence about the impact of its expansionism upon society, have also been conducted in terms of its relationship to ethnicity. Most of the literature on the politics of development has tended to assume that, apart from a few exceptions, the governments of most Third World states were ethnically neutral, at least at the level of ideology and intent. Given their multi-ethnic societies and generally 'artificial' borders, it was widely assumed that the ethnic loyalties and inter-ethnic rivalries of their citizens constituted 'problems' which the state-regimes had to resolve. The state must, apparently by definition, stand for national unity and against ethnic particularism.

It has taken most political scientists rather a long time to realise the inadequacy of this view. Instead of dismissing the widespread incidence of 'ethnic favouritism' in state recruitment, language or development policies as being merely temporary shortcomings, there is now some recognition of the extent to which Third World states exhibit a 'mono-ethnic tendency'. As Myron Weiner recently noted:

In country after country, a single ethnic group has taken control over the state

and used its powers to exercise control over others . . . In retrospect there has been far less 'nation-building' than many analysts had expected or hoped, for the process of state building has rendered many ethnic groups devoid of power or influence.⁹

The question of the degree of autonomy of the state may thus be restated in terms of the degree of its ethnic neutrality. States clearly do vary in the extent to which they are an 'organising committee' of a particular ethnic group; and the question of why and how they so vary is clearly central to any attempt to explain their different patterns of development.

For the most part, those who saw the state as tending towards ethnic neutrality have assumed also that ethnicity was a cultural given with which the state had to deal; discouraging and hoping to erode ethnic primordialism so as to replace ethnic loyalties eventually with nation-state loyalty. This was not a necessary implication, however. Even states which aspired to ethnic neutrality might find it useful to pursue policies that modified, and perhaps even strengthened, the ethnic loyalties of their multi-cultural citizenry. As Cynthia Enloe has stressed, ethnicity is not just a problem, it is also a resource which regimes may well be able to manipulate to their advantage, whether to legitimate their authority, enhance their power, strengthen state security or promote national unity.¹⁰ Numerous states have found it useful to recruit their armies, police, judiciary or civil servants predominantly and disproportionately from one ethnic community; or to use state power in order to change ethnic designations; or to promote distrust of particular minority groups. The colonial states were perhaps particularly prone to such policies.

Such state manipulation of ethnicity has usually been interpreted as a 'divide and rule' strategy. In class terms, it has been interpreted as a move by dominant class groups to preserve or enhance their power by inhibiting the formation of class consciousness amongst subordinate multi-cultural groups, which might be directed against themselves; and facilitating instead the mobilisation of subordinate classes behind their respective 'ethnic patrons'.

The manipulation of ethnicity by state elites is even more easy to observe in those states which have strong mono-ethnic tendencies. In such states, dominant cultural groups in the society (usually majorities) have been able to enhance or preserve their dominance through the instrument of state power; and, to varying extents, the process of the

formation of the state has encouraged the close link between the ethnic nationalism of this dominant group and state nationalism: the cultural symbolism of the dominant group thus forming the basis for the articulation of state-national identity. The ethnic attachments of the dominant community in such states is thus strengthened and transformed by its translation into state nationalism; by the same token, the ethnic consciousness of subordinate groups becomes fundamentally altered as they are constrained either to assimilate into the dominant group, or to identify themselves as cultural inferiors. Malaysia's pro-Bumiputra strategy and Sri Lanka's pro-Sinhalese stance provide classic examples.

The relationship between the state and ethnicity is thus a complex and close one. The state is neither simply the passive responder to ethnic attachments which are fixed by cultural givens; nor is it the case that the state is ever sufficiently hegemonic to determine, through its ideologies and institutions, the pattern and intensity of ethnic consciousness. The interactions between the two processes need to be examined if we are to elucidate particular cases.

Any attempt to explain ethnicity via a focus on the state faces the crucial problem of how to conceptualise the state, since the clarity and utility of the concept remains a contentious issue for political science in general, and for students of ethnicity in particular.¹¹ The intention here is simply to bring together some of the points which have been noted so far, to sketch out the main distinctions which might be made, and to indicate briefly how they may aid our understanding of ethnicity.¹²

State autonomy, extensiveness and hegemony

The 'statist paradigm' stresses the usefulness of viewing the state as an independent variable –an institution with its own interests and goals which has some capacity for controlling and modifying society.¹³ The approach is vulnerable to the charge of ambiguity and looseness however, and it seems to involve three distinct assertions that must be disentangled if we are to begin to relate ethnicity and state. Firstly, states vary as to the extent of their autonomy—their independence from the interests and support of dominant social groups, including the dominant cultural communities of the society. Secondly, states differ in the extensiveness of their influence over society. States which have sufficient capability to interfere in a wide range of social behaviour may nevertheless find that the impact of their interventions differs considerably from their original intentions. We must therefore make a third distinction, between the extensiveness of the state's influence and its degree of

hegemony—its ability to get its own way. To argue that ethnicity may be explained in terms of the character of the state is thus not necessarily to imply that it is the state which determines ethnicity. The states of Singapore and Nigeria may have comparable degrees of autonomy from the dominant ethnic groups in their societies, but they clearly differ markedly in the extent and effectiveness of their social control.

State elite, national identity and state institutional framework

The issue of the autonomy of the state directs attention to the question of whose interests the state represents. But the state cannot be reduced solely to the social identity of its office holders; and if we are to relate the character of the state to the nature of ethnic consciousness and relationships in a society, then we must recognise that the policies and behaviour of state office-holders relates partly to the social composition of the state elites, but also partly to the framework of the ideological values which adhere to their sense of national identity, and partly to the framework of state institutions within which they work, and which limit their options. In each of these aspects—elite composition, national identity and state institutional framework—the implications for ethnicity are apparent. Thus, for example, Akan-state bureaucrats in Ghana have clearly been much more circumscribed by the character of the state, in the ethnocentricity of their policies, than have Sinhalese bureaucrats in Sri Lanka.

Ethnic, class, patrimonial and bureaucratic elites

In studies of Third World politics, the composition of the state elites has been depicted most frequently in terms of one of four models. They have usually been portrayed either as the representatives of a dominant economic class; as representing a dominant (usually a majority) ethnic group; as comprising a 'patrimonial elite' (a factional alliance of individual patrons); or as an autonomous state bureaucracy (civil or military) with professional interests relating to their state offices.

Nigeria and Malaysia would offer examples of states whose political elites have frequently been depicted in class terms, as competing bourgeois class fractions. Their concern to retain or attain state power leads them, so the argument goes, to adopt divide and rule policies so as to promote and politicise specific ethnic alignments; engendering, in the late 1960s, tensions between Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa in Nigeria; and between Malays and Chinese in Malaysia.

In countries where the state elites have been depicted as spokesmen

For the dominant ethnic community however, state policies have sought to stress the status distinction between the dominant and subordinate cultural groups by inculcating values of deference in the excluded groups (as in South Africa), or by promoting assimilationist adaptation (as in Thailand, with respect to the Chinese, and to a lesser extent to the Pattani Malays).

The stances of patrimonial elites towards ethnicity have varied depending on the extent of elite cohesion and the degree to which clientelist relations develop on communal bases. In cases such as Ghana and Indonesia, patrimonial leaders have tended to mobilise support for themselves on communal lines, and have, in the process, fostered and politicised communal affiliations so as to promote particular patterns of ethnic affiliation and rivalry. Thus, for example, the elite rivalry between the Akan, Busia and the Ewe, Gbedemah, in the Ghana of 1969, fostered corresponding communal rivalries at mass level.

Bureaucratic state elites, on the other hand, tend to see themselves as technocratic experts, and thus to discourage political participation. The goal becomes, in this case, to erode or depoliticise ethnic affiliations, while inculcating strong national loyalties; as in the case of Singapore's paternalistic government, and its quest for a non-ethnically based 'Singaporean national identity'. As with each of the state-elite types however, the composition of the state elite does not of itself determine the form of state policies, or their impact. We must look also at the nature of their policy options—both ideological and institutional.

Mono-ethnic, ethnically neutral and consociational national ideologies

The states' characterisation of national identity is influenced by the historical circumstances in which states are formed, and in varying degrees it circumscribes the behaviour of the state elites and the type of cultural myths and symbols which they can employ in legitimating their policies. It also directly influences the status hierarchy associated with the state, since it serves to specify the type of cultural values and attributes associated with full membership of the nation and access to its resources.

The form of national identity which the state seeks to inculcate influences the development of ethnic consciousness. In states with mono-ethnic national ideologies, the identity of the nation has come to be closely and explicitly associated with the values and attributes of the dominant cultural group in society. Thus the Thais in Thailand or the Burmans in Burma are portrayed as the core communal group, while

the other groups have correspondingly lower status. Ethnic politics in such states revolves around assertions of, and questions of access to, the benefits of membership of this core community. By contrast, in states with more ethnically neutral national identities, as with Singapore or most of Black Africa, national symbols have been developed that are not associated with any particular cultural groups in the society; and the states proclaim meritocratic, 'ethnically colour-blind' values. Politics then involves the attempts by state elites to proclaim the illegitimacy and subversive nature of ethnic affiliations, and to undermine opposition groups by branding them as ethnically based.

A third pattern of national ideology is that which has been labelled 'consociational'. Such states stress the multiracialism and 'unity in diversity' of the national community, and proclaim their commitment to 'fair shares' between the component ethnic groups in the allocation of resources and values. Indonesia, and Malaysia up until the late 1960s, have both displayed consociational tendencies; and in such states the politics of ethnicity comes to revolve, in large part, around disagreements between the different cultural groups as to the criteria of 'fairness' which should be employed in state allocations. Each community urges the adoption of criteria favourable to itself, with the outcome depending upon the location and extent of state power.

The institutional framework for political participation

The behaviour and consciousness of cultural groups in a society is likely to be influenced by the options made available by the state for political participation, though this is not to suggest that there might not exist options other than those offered by the state. In some cases, the state institutions are designed to encourage mass political participation explicitly on an ethnic basis, characteristically in the form of promoting communally based political parties, as in Malaysia or pre-coup Fiji. Elsewhere the state seeks specifically to encourage participation on non-communal lines so as to promote goals of integration or assimilation. A frequent pattern in the Third World, however, has been for state elites, predominantly but not solely the military regimes, to remove or restrict opportunities for political participation. The intention has been to reduce the level of political mobilisation and also the intensity of political consciousness of the masses, so as to enhance the autonomy of the state. Such a strategy was pursued, for example, during the initial period of the Suharto regime in Indonesia.

Such variations in the options for political participation are likely to

influence the intensity, form and political salience of ethnic consciousness.

The impact of the state upon ethnicity

The issues of the extensiveness and hegemony of the state focus attention on the actual impact of the state upon society. The education, language and other policies of all states are likely to have some impact on ethnic consciousness and relations; but we need to avoid the trap of allowing a heuristic position—the focus on the nature and role of the state—to develop into a descriptive model, thus overstating the extent of state dominance over society. We cannot assume, especially in the Third World, that the state possesses the unity, administrative efficiency and hegemonic influence to achieve its goals of social control. In examining the actual impact of the state upon ethnicity we can distinguish three distinct patterns: the reactive, manipulative and responsive impacts.

The more radical the social restructuring attempted by the state and the less effective its administrative capabilities, the more likely it becomes that attempts to modify ethnic consciousness will have the effect merely of disrupting the cohesion of target communities and thence stimulating a defensive assertion of ethnic solidarity directed specifically against the state interventions. The classic example of such a reactive impact would be the incidence of ethnic separatist rebellion amongst ethnic minorities faced with assimilationist state policies, such as has occurred in Burma, for example, amongst the Shan, the Karen, the Kachin and others. Instead of imbuing deference to dominant ethnic cultures, the state unwittingly encourages assertions of ethnic nationalist rights. In some cases, however, the state may indeed be in a position to implement its policies on ethnicity effectively, and to promote the type of changes in consciousness and behaviour intended. The impact, in this case, is responsive. When the Singapore government, for example, seeks to shift Chinese loyalties away from the regional and dialect groupings, and towards a pan-Chinese identity focused on Confucianist values as propagated by the state, its control over the social and political environment in Singapore is probably sufficiently hegemonic to ensure success.

The intermediate situation is that where the response to state interventions on ethnicity is a manipulative one. Target communities cannot escape the interventions of the state, but they might be able to treat such interventions as resources to be employed for their own advantage.

so that the outcome differs significantly from that intended by the state. In the case of the Indonesian Chinese, for example, it appears likely that assimilationist state policies have been utilised in such a way as to modify Chinese ethnic consciousness, but not always so as to weaken it or to promote an assimilationist outcome. The adoption of the Indonesian Bahasa language, for example, seems to have provided a new medium for the communication of Chinese values and loyalties.

Conclusion

If ethnic affiliation offers a powerful basis for a sense of identity and security based on the model of the kinship unit, and if the contemporary state intervenes in society sufficiently to influence the cultural attributes, the political options, and the security threats with which members of multi-cultural societies are faced, then it would seem feasible to look towards a focus on the character of the state as the basis for an understanding of how and why ethnic consciousness develops and becomes politicised.

Any discussion of the state and ethnicity must be able to take account of the causal role played by the patterns of cultural pluralism in societies in influencing the elite composition, national ideology and institutional structure of the state; but it must also recognise the consequences of variations in state character upon the development of ethnic consciousness. The distinctions made here might provide a starting point for such an exercise.

Notes

¹ W Connor, 'Nation-building or nation-destroying', *World Politics* 24(3) 1972, p 319.

² *Ibid.*, pp 334-55; and W Connor, 'Ethnonationalism' in M Weiner and S P Huntington (eds), *Understanding Political Development*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1987, pp 197-9. Only the last factor listed by Connor, the tendency to favour explanations based on class, cannot be closely related to the various assumptions of the modernisation paradigm.

³ D Ronen, *The Quest for Self-Determination*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1979; N Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena. participation and ethnicity in African politics*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976; C Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, Madison/London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976.

⁴ M Weiner and S P Huntington, *Understanding Political Development*, p xx.

⁵ See, for example, W Connor, 'Ethnoregionalism'; and D Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.

⁶ A D Smith, 'States and Homelands: the social and geopolitical implications of national territory', *Millennium* 10(3) 1981, pp 187-202.

⁷ R H Taylor, 'Perceptions of ethnicity in the politics of Burma', *Southeast Asian Journal of*

- Social Science* 10(1) 1982, pp 7-22, B Lintner, 'The Shans and the Shan State of Burma', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 5(4) 1984, pp 403-50.
- ⁸ W Connor, 'Nation-building or nation-destroying'.
- ⁹ M Weiner, 'Political change: Asia, Africa, and the Middle East', in M Weiner and S P Huntington, *Understanding Political Development*, pp 36-7.
- ¹⁰ C Enloe, *Police, Military and Ethnicity: foundations of state power*, New Brunswick/London: Transaction, 1980.
- ¹¹ P R Brass, 'Ethnic groups and the state', in Brass (ed), *Ethnic Groups and the State*, London: Croom Helm, 1984, pp 1-58.
- ¹² For a preliminary attempt to relate the character of the state to the politics of ethnicity in specific Southeast Asian states, see D Brown, 'The state of ethnicity and the ethnicity of the state', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12, 1989 (forthcoming).
- ¹³ The 'statist paradigm' is critically examined in the 'Symposium' articles by G A Almond, F A Nordlinger, T J Lowi and S Fabbrini in *American Political Science Review* 82(3) 1988, pp 853-901.

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Incentives and behaviour in the ethnic politics of Sri Lanka and Malaysia

Recent developments in Sri Lankan and Malaysian ethnic conflict raise important issues about the development of conflict and conflict-reducing mechanisms. For twenty-five years, Sri Lanka edged closer and closer to outright warfare between Tamils and Sinhalese, until the Tamil Tiger insurgency embroiled the island in fighting so severe that the Sri Lankans called upon Indian assistance to contain the guerrillas. Malaysia, by contrast, has moved several times to the precipice—most recently in 1987—only to draw back. The argument of this article is that there are systematic differences underpinning the two patterns. Those differences pertain both to the raw conditions of conflict and to the institutions that arise or are devised to reduce the conflict. Although conflict conditions and institutional setting relate to each other in subtle ways, they also have a degree of independent variation. Severe conflict can be reduced by deliberate action, while relatively moderate conflict, if left unattended or, worse, nurtured under unfavourable political institutions, can grow into quite serious ethnic problems.

Conflict prospect and retrospect: Sri Lanka and Malaysia

If we were to go back to independence and ask which of these two countries was likely to have the more serious ethnic conflict in the decades ahead, the answer would be unequivocal. Any knowledgeable observer would have predicted that Malaysia (then Malaya) was in for serious, perhaps devastating, Malay-Chinese conflict, while Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was likely to experience only mild difficulty between Sinhalese and Tamils. Certainly, that is what British officials thought, for in Ceylon they rebuffed attempts to secure special constitutional protection for minorities, while in Malaya they encouraged inter-ethnic compromise and approved a constitution with many ethnically protective provisions. These views were based on a sense that conditions in Ceylon were more propitious for the containment of ethnic conflict.

First, the Ceylon Tamils comprised a mere 11 per cent of the Ceylonese population. A small minority, its aspirations could easily be met, even if those entailed, for example, some modest degree of overrepresentation in the civil service. The Chinese constituted well over a third of the population of the Federation of Malaya and might reasonably have been thought indigestible, especially if the 10 per cent Indian minority were added to the Chinese; the Malays were scarcely a majority and not nearly as securely placed in the Malayan economy as the Sinhalese were in the Ceylonese economy.

Second, the Ceylon Tamils arrived in Sri Lanka on average perhaps a thousand years ago. The Chinese and Indians, by contrast, were relatively recent migrants to Malaya. The Ceylon Tamils were citizens, whereas the Malayan Chinese and Indians, by and large, were not. The Ceylon Tamils were legitimate participants in the political system: some of the early Ceylonese nationalists, such as Ponnambalam Arunachalam and his brother, Ponnambalam Ramanathan, were Tamils.¹ The Malayan Chinese were not yet accepted as legitimate participants in politics. Around the time of independence, segments of the Malay press were advocating the return of the Chinese to China. The contrast between indigenous Malays and immigrant non-Malays was far more developed than was any comparable contrast between Sinhalese and Ceylon Tamils.² Admittedly, the Indian (or estate) Tamils, who had migrated to Ceylon some decades earlier, were disfranchised in 1949; however, it is not they, but the Ceylon Tamils, who are involved in the current conflict, and no one would have dreamed of disfranchising or deporting the Ceylon Tamils.

Third, events before and at independence were not conducive to peaceful ethnic relations in Malaya. The Chinese guerrillas who had fought the Japanese occupation forces during World War II had also fought the Malay villagers who resisted their exactions of food and supplies. After the war, the guerrillas emerged from the jungle, proclaimed the abolition of the Malay sultanates and purported to annex Malaya to China. Until the British completed the reoccupation of Malaya, there were blood-baths throughout much of the peninsula. Thereafter, the guerrillas returned to the jungle to fight the British and the largely-Malay armed forces, in a war that lasted officially from 1948 to 1960. Again, the hostilities had, *de facto*, an ethnic character, and they succeeded in undermining the Chinese political position in Malaya at a crucial period. Nothing remotely comparable occurred in Sri Lanka, which remained entirely peaceful. Sinhalese and Tamils had both joined

the Ceylon Defence Force during the war and the Ceylon Army that succeeded it after independence. Tamil leaders had proposed a form of ethnically-balanced representation for the post-independence parliament but the British had rejected it. Independence nonetheless found the Tamils with ministerial portfolios.

Fourth, where Malay and Chinese elites had been divided by the structure of educational institutions in colonial and post-colonial Malaya, Sinhalese and Tamil elites had been brought together by the educational system in Ceylon.³ Although common, English-medium education was available for Malays and Chinese, the Malay leadership class was disproportionately channelled into the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar, a school self-consciously modelled on the British public school. No comparable mono-ethnic elite institution existed in Ceylon. Instead, a variety of elite colleges was established, largely in Colombo where both Sinhalese and Tamils were educated. As a result, although the two countries had approximately the same populations, the Malay and Chinese political leaders in Malaya were not on intimate terms whereas the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders in Ceylon frequently knew each other well, having been to school together. It is fair to describe the Ceylonese elite at independence as genuinely intercommunal, sharing many common values.⁴ The same description would not apply to the Malaysian elite at independence.

Fifth, Malay politicians were quite discriminating and cautious about whom they would deal with, and before independence some Malay newspapers were urging 'no diplomacy with the Chinese',⁵ but the Ceylonese had what could only be described as a bargaining political culture. No agreement was automatically foreclosed. Tamil parties dealt with several Sinhalese parties, and vice versa. The enquiry 'What are your terms?' was frequently heard, and party discussions often revolved around the question of whether a better deal could not be obtained from a competitor of the party that had made the last offer. For purposes of inter-ethnic negotiation, it would be reasonable to assume that such a bargaining political culture would be more advantageous than one that put a premium on personal relations, was hesitant to deal at arm's length, and had a set of unwritten rules governing inter-ethnic communication.⁶

Despite these favourable conditions, Sri Lanka is now in the midst of an ugly ethnic war; and despite its unfavourable conditions, Malaysia has been at peace. A period of escalating tension in 1987 led to arrests, but not to inter-ethnic violence. The last serious episode of ethnic

violence in Malaysia occurred in May 1969, when riots followed the national and state elections of that month. This contrast between the two countries is not wholly fortuitous, and it does not vitiate the contrasting conflict conditions just mentioned. Malaysia has had the more difficult problem, but it has also had better conflict management.

The outcomes of ethnic politics depend, then, on the interplay of conflict-fostering conditions and conflict-reducing processes and institutions. Nigeria's ethnic problems have been at least as serious as those in the Sudan, but whereas the Sudan is now embroiled in its second civil war, Nigeria seems far removed from the experience of its one civil war, the Biafran war of 1967-70. Again, the difference is attributable to the conflict management systems of the two states. And Northern Ireland, which admittedly has more intractable problems than either Belgium or Canada, also has practically no political institutions of conflict reduction. I shall now focus on the interplay of conflict conditions and institutions. For such an enquiry, there can be no more instructive material than the contrast between Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Vote pooling and multi-ethnic coalitions

The most important contrast between Malaysian and Sri Lankan ethnic politics has, without doubt, been the role of multi-ethnic political coalitions in the two countries. The dominant parties in the Sri Lankan system have all been ethnically based, whereas the dominant parties in the Malaysian system have been the multi-ethnic Alliance and its successor, the National Front.

The Ceylon National Congress, formed in 1919, was originally a multi-ethnic national movement modelled on the Indian National Congress. Within two years, however, most Tamils had left the Congress in a dispute over the future mode of representation, and Sri Lanka settled into a pattern of representation by ethnically-based political parties. Although there were still some Tamils in the mainly-Sinhalese United National Party (UNP) which took power at independence, by the mid-1950s virtually all politically-active Sri Lankan Tamils had opted for either the Tamil Congress or the Federal Party, leaving the UNP, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the various left-wing parties to the Sinhalese. Consequently, Sri Lanka's party system has revolved around the competition, on the one hand, of the two main Sinhalese parties for Sinhalese votes, and, on the other, of the two main Tamil parties for Tamil votes (until the two Tamil parties merged in 1972). With the

exception of a brief period from 1965–68 when a UNP-led coalition government included the Tamil parties, the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition, particularly for the Sinhalese vote, have pushed the parties towards meeting ethnic demands and have limited their leeway to make concessions across ethnic lines.

The rise of the SLFP as a competitor to the UNP in the 1950s went hand in hand with appeals to Sinhalese ethnic sentiment. After the resounding victory of an SLFP-led coalition in 1956, 'Sinhala only' legislation was passed, and Tamil civil servants were discriminated against on linguistic grounds. Rebuffed at the polls, the UNP responded by becoming as ethnically exclusive as the SLFP. When Prime Minister S W R D Bandaranaike attempted to cool Sinhalese–Tamil tension by making a compromise agreement with the Federal Party leader, S J V Chelvanayagam, the UNP campaigned against it, and the compromise was abandoned. Following Bandaranaike's assassination in 1959, his wife, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, became prime minister. Under her regime from 1960–65 there was an increase in favouritism towards Sinhalese Buddhists. Tamil protest was met with harsh measures, including armed occupation of the Tamil areas from 1961–63. Following the victory of the UNP-led coalition in the 1965 elections, concessions were made to redress some Tamil grievances, but a modest devolution to district councils was thwarted by SLFP opposition and the fear of UNP backbenchers that they would lose their seats to SLFP candidates if they complied. The Federal Party left the coalition over this issue. Inter-ethnic compromise was strictly limited by intra-ethnic competition.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike's second regime, from 1970–77, was characterised by an even more virulent anti-Tamil strain. In 1972, a new constitution was promulgated which gave Buddhism a 'foremost place' and virtually ignored the Tamil presence in the country. A scheme for 'standardising marks' was implemented; its effect was to reduce the grades achieved by Tamil students on examinations that determined university entrance, thereby depriving large numbers of Tamils of the university education for which they were plainly more qualified than many of the Sinhalese who were admitted.⁷ By such measures, a half generation of recruits for Tamil separatist organisations was created. By the time the UNP came to power in the 1977 elections, Sinhalese-dominated governments, always with an eye to Sinhalese political competition, had managed to plant the seeds of guerrilla warfare that the UNP government was later to reap.

The structure of political competition made it incumbent on each of

the major Sinhalese parties to champion the cause of Sinhalese ethnic assertion against Tamil interests, and segments of each party were militantly chauvinist. The anti-Tamil riots that followed the elections of 1977 and did much to encourage a Tamil resort to arms, and the anti-Tamil riots of 1983 that accelerated the armed warfare were asserted to have been organised, at least in substantial part, by activists associated with the UNP.⁸

Underlying this process of bidding and outbidding for the Sinhalese vote was an electoral system that translated small swings in popular votes into large swings in seats. The system was first-past-the-post (that is, election by plurality) in mainly single-member constituencies. With multi-party competition in the Sinhalese south, it was often possible to win a parliamentary majority on a plurality of 30-40 per cent of the vote. In each of the six parliamentary elections held between 1952 and 1970 there was alternation in office. In the south, the vast majority of constituencies was Sinhalese-dominated. As a result, parties derived rich rewards from appealing to Sinhalese ethnic sentiment and conspicuously opposing government proposals to conciliate the Tamils. The combination of largely homogenous constituencies, plurality elections in mainly single-member constituencies, and a competitive party configuration on the Sinhalese side that produced two main contenders for power and two plausible contenders for nearly every seat created a system that was exceedingly sensitive to Sinhalese opinion and inhospitable to inter-ethnic accommodation.

Several of these conditions were later altered. In 1978, the UNP government promulgated a new constitution that made some important electoral changes. In a major departure from the parliamentary system, a separately-elected presidency was instituted. The president is elected by a system of preferential voting that accords weight to voters' second choices in a way they have not been weighted in plurality parliamentary elections. Tamil second preferences might, in some circumstances, actually provide the president his margin of victory. Prudent presidential candidates could hardly ignore Tamil interests under such conditions. In parliamentary elections, the plurality system was changed to a party list system, with proportional representation in multi-member constituencies. Small swings in votes should no longer produce large swings in seats. Under normal conditions, Tamil candidates might also find a place on Sinhalese party lists in constituencies with Tamil minorities, and parties might be more moderate in ethnic appeals now that every vote in each constituency counts. In short, under normal conditions the

new electoral system might produce a change in the character of the party system.

Soon after these changes came into effect, however, conditions were anything but normal. The Tamil United Liberation Front (successor to both the Federal Party and the Tamil Congress) had been excluded from parliament; separatist violence had begun in earnest; and Sinhalese and Tamil opinion had become so polarised that, in the short term at least, no electoral system could foster moderation. In addition to accommodative arrangements, therefore, timing needs to be taken into account. Thus far, the new arrangements have made no impact in moderating the conditions fostered by the old.⁹

It is necessary to emphasise the combination of conditions in Sri Lanka that made ethnic extremism so profitable and inter-ethnic moderation so costly. Very few conditions were different in Malaysia, and yet the results have been dramatically different. Like Sri Lanka, Malaysia has had plurality elections, entirely in single-member constituencies. Like Sri Lanka, there has been a good deal of party competition, on both the Malay and non-Malay sides, much of it revolving around attention to mutually exclusive ethnic claims and demands. Unlike Sri Lanka, however, inter-ethnic compromise has also had a claim on party attention, and moderation, as well as extremism, has paid some dividends.

Three differences between Malaysia and Sri Lanka have produced a different balance of incentives. These differences relate to timing as well as to structure.

The first, which in some measure was fortuitous, is that the Malaysians began working on inter-ethnic accommodation early in relation to independence. They had had a bitter taste of ethnic violence during and after World War II and did not wait, as the Sri Lankans did, until accumulated grievances had again reached the threshold of widespread and sustained violence.

The second difference is that there have been significantly more ethnically heterogeneous parliamentary constituencies in Malaysia than in Sri Lanka. This was not always the case. In 1955, more than 84 per cent of the registered voters for the Malayan parliamentary elections were Malays. But, largely because of compromises reached by the multi-ethnic coalition (see below), the composition of the parliamentary electorate changed quickly. By 1959, the electorate was already more than one-third Chinese, and by 1964 it was 38 per cent Chinese and 8 per cent Indian.

As the electorate as a whole was heterogeneous, so were individual, single-member constituencies. By the early 1960s, 40 per cent of the parliamentary constituencies had Chinese pluralities and non-Malay majorities of registered voters. An additional 20 per cent had a registered electorate that was at least 30 per cent Chinese, and in only about 20 per cent of all constituencies did registered Chinese voters comprise less than 10 per cent. (Beginning in 1974, constituency delimitations effected considerable changes, to the disadvantage of non-Malays,¹⁰ but this was long after the structure of party politics was established.)

The Sri Lankan figures provide a marked contrast. In only 11 per cent of all parliamentary constituencies were Ceylon Tamils a plurality as late as 1976 (based on 1971 census figures), and in all but one of those (where they comprised 49.8 per cent) they were actually a majority—usually an overwhelming majority. In only one additional constituency out of 160 did Ceylon Tamils comprise between 30 and 50 per cent, and in only another 8 per cent did they form between 10 and 30 per cent of the constituency. In 81 per cent of all constituencies, Ceylon Tamils comprised less than 10 per cent, usually far less. In comparison, the Malaysian Chinese comprised less than 10 per cent in only 18 per cent of all constituencies.¹¹

It is important to emphasise that these figures reflect not merely the fact that Malaysian Chinese were three times as numerous as Ceylon Tamils, in proportion to the total population of the country, but that the Tamils and Sinhalese are much more regionally concentrated than are Chinese and Malays. This point is easily demonstrated by noting that in ten of the eighteen constituencies in which Ceylon Tamils were a plurality or majority, they actually formed a majority of over 90 per cent.

What difference does regional concentration make? It has a bearing both on party positions and on the prospects for inter-ethnic coalitions based on the exchange of votes. Under first-past-the-post elections, if Sinhalese comprise 70-95 per cent of the voters, as they did in a large number of constituencies, and two main Sinhalese parties compete for those votes, there is hardly any restraint on the anti-Tamil positions that can be taken. The 1-2 per cent of Tamil voters in such constituencies can offer nothing to the party that is more moderate on ethnic issues. The same is true at the party level nationwide: where constituencies are largely homogeneous, a Tamil party has little to offer a Sinhalese party that is inclined to moderation on ethnic issues but fearful of the loss of Sinhalese votes as a result of its moderation.

The *determinants* are discussed through chapters on the heritage of the past, state and society, and international context, and a concluding chapter on famine, petrodollars and foreign debt. The *determiners* are discussed in intervening chapters on parties and participation, the military, revolution, and significantly, given its absence in other comparable volumes, women.

The picture of Third World politics that emerges is a complex one but common strands do appear. The spread of capitalism inevitably created new class formations, but communalism and patronage remain the dominant features of politics. Most rule is presidentially based, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. Parties have declined in influence and are generally used to support the bureaucratic apparatus of regimes. They still, however, maintain a legitimising role in some societies. Single party or military rule remains the norm. The new-found democracy in some Latin American countries can all too easily founder in the divide between the expectations raised by electoral promises and the dire situation of debt and dependency which limits the ability of governments to deliver the goods. This volume is particularly good on the interrelationship between political processes and global economic pressures. It has much sound, good sense and balanced judgement to suit the different requirements of a wide range of readers and is heartily recommended.

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The formation and persistence of the Alliance Party in the 1950s and after is a complicated story. The principal motivation for the formation of the Alliance was the fact that town council elections, in which electorates were heterogeneous, preceded the first national elections, in which they were not. Both sets of elections took place before independence. The town council elections, conducted in 1952-53, were regarded as a kind of trial heat which it was important to win. The multi-ethnic Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), led by Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar, was well organised throughout the peninsula. In 1951, Dato' Onn had resigned as leader of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the leading Malay party, because UMNO had refused to accept non-Malay members. As a result, Onn's multi-ethnic credentials were very much in order. The vast majority of the urban population and the majority of the town council electorates were non-Malays. To compete with Onn's IMP, it made sense for UMNO to align with a non-Malay party. Malay votes alone could not win town council elections. As it happened, the local leader of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in Kuala Lumpur was opposed to the IMP, and so the MCA made an agreement with UMNO, later replicated in other towns, to run candidates on a joint 'UMNO-MCA Alliance' slate against the IMP. The slate was successful in Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere, and the local Alliances ripened into a national multi-ethnic coalition, the Alliance Party, which later won all but one of the parliamentary seats in the 1955 elections. For inter-ethnic accommodation, there could hardly be a more convincing demonstration of the power of formal incentives to induce informal arrangements.

The 1955 parliamentary elections preceded the granting of citizenship to most Chinese and Indians, and, as I mentioned earlier, Malays comprised an 84 per cent majority of the national electorate. Had these national elections preceded the town council elections, UMNO would not have found the formation of a multi-ethnic coalition to be in its interest; it would, instead, have responded exclusively to Malay demands, and the independence constitution of 1957, which consisted of an elaborate package of carefully negotiated compromises, would not have been possible. Malaysian politics would have been more like Sri Lankan politics. The liberal citizenship provisions for non-Malays that were part of the independence bargain would not have been enacted. Fewer non-Malays could then have become citizens, and the electorate, which by 1964 had become only 54.1 per cent Malay, would have remained overwhelmingly Malay, as it was in 1955. Malay parties would have competed

with each other, as Sinhalese parties did, by pursuing the interests of their own group at the expense of the other half of the population.

What in fact happened was quite different. Committed to a permanent coalition and to inter-ethnic compromise, the Alliance (and later the National Front) created opportunities for communally based parties to line up on the flanks and accuse the ruling coalition of selling out the rights of their respective ethnic group. Once this happened, the Alliance was locked in the middle of the ethnic spectrum. All alternatives looked worse than the status quo. For the MCA, UMNO was, on ethnic issues, the most moderate Malay party with which to form a coalition. Joining with other non-Malay parties would be futile, for no combination of non-Malay parties alone could control a majority of seats to form a government. For UMNO, the MCA was likewise the most accommodating Chinese party. The only plausible Malay coalition partner in a possible all-Malay government was the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS), which most UMNO leaders, secular as they were, regarded with deep suspicion. Moreover, the *raison d'être* of PAS was opposition to UMNO's compromises with the Chinese. On the other hand, neither the MCA nor UMNO could form a government alone. Although UMNO controlled many more votes than the MCA did, it could still not count on forming a government. MCA candidates received more Malay votes from UMNO supporters than UMNO candidates received from MCA supporters, but the heterogeneous nature of more than half the parliamentary constituencies made it impossible for UMNO to be certain of securing a majority of seats alone. While relations between UMNO and the MCA were not always cordial, each side knew very well that electoral arithmetic made the other the lesser evil by far. The Alliance coalition had created opposition that divided the party system into three blocs: non-Malay opposition, Malay opposition, and Alliance. Redivision was not practicable, and so the coalition, however unsatisfactory, was self-perpetuating.

The exchange of votes thus formed the basis of compromise, as it might equally have done in Sri Lanka if the present electoral system had been in force earlier. To see the difference in ethnic effects, one needs only to contrast the 'Sinhala only' legislation of 1956 with the Malaysian language act of 1967, or the 1972 Sri Lankan Constitution with the 1957 Malaysian Constitution and the 1971 amendments to it. The Sri Lankan language policy and state religion provisions symbolically wrote the Sri Lankan Tamils out of the polity. The Malaysian language act, by contrast, provided for the continued 'liberal use' of

English, Chinese and Tamil, much to the chagrin of Malay language extremists. The Malaysian Constitution safeguarded a 'special position' for the Malays, subject to the 'legitimate interests' of the other groups. After the 1969 riots, the Constitution was amended to preclude any challenge to the special position of the Malays or to the citizenship of the Chinese. These amendments were enacted in an environment that could only be described as unfavourable to non-Malays. Despite that, the potentially tenuous citizenship of the non-Malays was solidified permanently, at the same time as the Sri Lankan Tamils, although unquestionably citizens, were increasingly being regarded and treated as aliens in their own land.

The explanation for the course of Malaysian ethnic politics lies in a combination of incentives, leadership and chance. The future coalition partners responded to electoral incentives in the early 1950s, and, by agreeing to non-Malay citizenship, changed the composition of the electorate in a way that created new electoral incentives to compromise. Of course, it was sheer fortuity that the local elections preceded the national ones. And it was equally fortunate that the main competitor of UMNO was the multi-ethnic IMP. Had a militantly pro-Malay competitor party existed, UMNO would surely have hesitated to make a lasting arrangement with the MCA. Fortunately for both, PAS grew as a reaction to the Alliance, rather than antedating it. Coalition was made possible by the combination of heterogeneous constituencies and lack of serious intra-ethnic competition. It was also good leadership, particularly on the part of Tengku Abdul Rahman, the national UMNO leader, that recognised the long-term utility of the Alliance format and decided both to approve it locally and pursue it nationally, even though the composition of the national electorate was initially very different. Once again, therefore, it is not any particular condition— not incentives, not chance, not political will alone—but a combination of all three that governed the choices that were made and the effects they had.

Still less did good will or inter-ethnic tolerance determine events. Tolerance was not always present in Malaysia; at most times before the recurrent Sri Lankan violence began in earnest, there was probably more inter-ethnic good will in Sri Lanka. Rather, the course of Malaysian politics was determined by a series of responses to the constraints that constantly impinged on decision-makers. To say this is to denigrate the part played by heroic action for ethnic harmony and to elevate the role of simple good judgement and rational response to the predicament in which decision-makers found themselves. Implicit in any such assess-

ment is the possibility for others, working within the constraints that impinge on their own choices, to alter the predicaments that will face future decision-makers, so that they will respond in ways conducive to inter-ethnic accommodation.

Party systems and ethnic policies

It might be thought that an ethnically balanced coalition, even one slanted somewhat more toward the interests of one group than another, would tend to immobilism, that such a coalition could not innovate policies that impinged on vested ethnic interests, and that the only policy it could have would be a predictable compromise. There were some tendencies towards immobilism in the Malaysia of the 1960s, although even then not everything was compromise and not everything was predictable. In the 1970s, however, there were dramatic departures in ethnic policy regarding language, education and the economy. On some subjects, Malaysian ethnic policy went in the same direction as Sri Lankan policy, and in others Malaysian policy was even more ethnically exclusive. But in virtually every case Malaysian policy appeared to be more carefully planned and implemented in a more controlled and less threatening way.

In language policy, Malaysia moved to make Malay the medium of instruction in nearly all the schools, one grade level at a time, beginning in 1969, soon after the Kuala Lumpur riots.¹² This was a ministerial decision, not contemplated by the previous policy, and it went far beyond the Sri Lankan two-stream policy of education in Sinhala and Tamil, but it was implemented without very much difficulty and was widely accepted. What was by no means accepted—and therefore not implemented—was the abolition of the Chinese primary schools mooted from time to time by Malay extremists.

In higher education, the Malaysian policy of the 1970s resembled that of Sri Lanka, but again it was put into effect—and altered—in a more orderly and confident way. In the early 1970s, there was a sense that the Malaysian Chinese and the Sri Lankan Tamils, respectively, were overrepresented as students in higher education. As the Sri Lankans adopted standardisation of marks, the Malaysians also altered admission criteria to universities, so that many more Malay students were admitted and Chinese and Indians were refused admission. In both Malaysia and Sri Lanka, the policy precipitated a strong reaction on the part of the excluded groups.

Once again, the action taken as a result illustrates the blend of chance and structure in determining outcomes in the two systems. The Malaysian Chinese, with considerably higher average incomes than the Sri Lankan Tamils, responded first by sending thousands of students abroad for higher education. Many fewer Sri Lankan Tamils were able to go even to India, much less to Britain, Australia, Canada or the USA. Beyond this, however, in 1978 the MCA, its electoral fortunes then at one of its many low points in recent years, made it clear that it could no longer accept declining quotas in higher education at home. The MCA and UMNO jointly agreed that university admission quotas for non-Malays would be revised upwards in stages until they reflected the ethnic composition of the population as a whole. In Sri Lanka, the UNP committed itself in 1977 to abolish the standardisation of marks. Upon assuming office, it attempted to do so, but provoked a Sinhalese backlash. The result was a series of partial amendments that have opened university admission to more Tamils than were enrolled under standardisation, but still many fewer than before standardisation. The Malaysian agreement, a product of the coalition, was implemented largely as planned; the Sri Lankan policy repeal was implemented only in part. Both because of the Malaysian Chinese ability to absorb higher educational costs and because of the way the respective policies were introduced and amended, the Sri Lankan educational preferences have been far more damaging to national unity than the Malaysian preferences have been.

The Malaysians have gone much further than the Sri Lankans in ethnic restructuring of the economy. Following the riots of 1969, at a time when the Chinese had experienced the brunt of Malay anger, Malay predominance was reinforced. A consensus developed within the government that the violence stemmed from Malay economic grievances. In 1971, an extensive programme called the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to achieve ethnic proportionality in employment and 30 per cent Malay share ownership by 1990. Policies were also devised to increase loans, government contracts, licences and franchises available to Malays.¹³ As the NEP was put in place at a time of Chinese political weakness, it would have been difficult to oppose. But, in fact, most Chinese political leaders shared the view that augmenting Malay economic resources was necessary. Moreover, the stated policy was that the changes would be accomplished without expropriating existing business—only future opportunities would be affected—and the policy-makers were flexible about implementation. Strict employment

quotas were not enforced. Well-connected Chinese found ways to profit from the new policies. Although the full balance sheet on the NEP remains to be drawn up, dramatic changes in economic power were achieved without major disruptions to the economy or the polity.

As this was happening, the multi-ethnic coalition was also undergoing enlargement, to embrace all of the peninsular Malaysian parties except one party on the Malay flank, PAS (which joined the coalition briefly), and one on the Chinese flank. The MCA, and the Chinese voice in general, became somewhat weaker in the National Front than it had been in the Alliance, but Chinese votes were still important to victory, and the coalition was unwilling to dispense with any of the Chinese political parties. Beginning in 1983, a protracted leadership battle in the MCA was endured in the coalition in a way that demonstrated the strongly held sentiment that, even in bad times, the coalition was better than any alternative. Hardly had the MCA leadership issue been resolved when UMNO itself suffered a split in the party, and a series of ethnically contentious issues cumulated in a major crisis in 1987. Still the coalition survived.

Taken together, the cases of Malaysia and Sri Lanka show that small differences can produce big differences; that once a multi-ethnic coalition gets started, multi-ethnicity can become a habit; that inter-ethnic accommodation does not preclude major structural changes in ethnic relations; and that, without accommodative arrangements, governmental actions that could otherwise have been either endured or modified can be so provocative as to produce violent responses. The Malaysians took no chances with ethnic conflict in the 1950s, and the structures they established could later be modified to take account of changed conditions. The Sri Lankans took no precautions with their milder ethnic conflict at independence, and their failure to establish sound structures left them defenceless later, when the conflict became more serious. Contrast what followed the Malaysian post-election riots of 1969 with what followed the Sri Lankan post-election riots of 1977. The Malaysian response to the riots was to tilt towards Malay economic aspirations. Within a year of the Sri Lankan riots, the UNP government had enacted a constitution likely to provide Sri Lankan Tamils with more political influence than they had ever previously enjoyed. At worst, little harm, in terms of ethnic conflict, came out of the former. At best, little good has come, so far, out of the latter. By the late 1970s, it was well established that inter-ethnic moderation often (though not always) pays in Malaysia, while extremism usually pays in Sri Lanka.

In neither country were underlying ethnic sentiments assuaged, but in only one was behaviour based on those sentiments significantly constrained.

Conciliation, early and late

It is all well and good to see in retrospect that the arrangements made by the Malaysians thirty-five years ago saved them many difficulties that the Sri Lankans, because they lacked such arrangements, have experienced. One way to read this comparative experience is simply to conclude that earlier is better. There are many aphorisms—about an ounce of prevention, for example—that attest to the same general lesson. True though it is, that particular lesson is not very helpful to those countries for which it is no longer early but in fact very late. What are states such as Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and Sudan to do when they are already *in extremis*?

One thing they might do is to read the Malaysian lesson more broadly. The Malaysian arrangements, above all, made moderation pay, and by now it is hardly a secret how one goes about doing this. *The most reliable way, under conditions of democratic elections, is to make politicians reciprocally dependent on the votes of members of groups other than their own.* In the Malaysian case, as I have shown, highly heterogeneous constituencies (plus some unusual early conditions – namely, multi-ethnic rather than ethnic-flank competition) were the main vehicle for facilitating inter-ethnic vote exchange. In post-1979 Sri Lanka, alternative voting would be another way, provided there is a return to a semblance of normal politics. In the Nigerian Second Republic, electoral distribution requirements for the winning presidential candidate were yet another way of encouraging broadening of electoral support.¹⁴ Neither the wishful abolition of ethnic parties nor a solemn admonition to politicians to think of national rather than ethnic interests is a good substitute for providing concrete incentives for conciliatory action. Pure heart is not the issue—decent behaviour is.

Where groups are territorially separate, of course, arrangements for devolution may be in order, especially if separatist organisations have arisen and are fighting. Here the obstacles to agreement are formidable. Federalism has a bad name in many countries that could benefit from it. Sovereignty seems in principle to be indivisible, and it requires substantial modification of conventional thinking in a world of putatively sovereign states to envision the benefits of dividing up territory. The

potential costs come much more readily to mind. In particular, it is widely thought that devolution paves the way for separatist independence. On this, there is evidence that the way to prevent the loss of a region to which power is devolved is to keep some substantial portion of the population of that region occupied in rewarding roles outside the region, particularly at the centre. In the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils, nearly one-third of whom have customarily resided outside the north and east of the island, this should be easy to arrange, provided that their security can be assured. The case of the Ibo, who returned to northern Nigeria after the civil war, and remained undisturbed, provides one of many models of sustained group interests outside the group's home region.

If we know roughly what incentives to build in—and I believe we do—what we assuredly do not know is what incentives to offer the parties to the conflict in order to secure their assent to the requisite arrangements, once the conflict has gone as far as it has in Sri Lanka. Interests in pursuing the conflict often outweigh interests in reducing it. As the Tamil insurgency shows, the increasing concessions offered at virtually every stage of the armed conflict—concessions that would easily have conciliated their antagonists at earlier stages—will be insufficient to placate the determined leaders of armed movements. But there is yet a later stage of some such conflicts, in which there is either a military victory, as in Nigeria, or a point at which both sides simultaneously become significantly weaker, as they did in the Sudan in 1972. At such points, intra-ethnic competition, which often makes inter-ethnic conciliation difficult (and certainly has in Sri Lanka) may be muted. When disaster is impending, the parties are likely to be brought to new ways of thinking. Although it is too late in such cases for the Malaysian ounce of prevention, it still needs to be emphasised just how serious are the costs of repeatedly ignoring some such prophylaxis in a severely divided society. After protracted armed conflict, if the lessons are widely enough understood, it will not necessarily be too late for the survivors to apply the Nigerian pound of cure.

Notes

¹ For a brief review of this period, see S Arasaratnam, *Ceylon*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967, pp 165–71.

² The indigene-immigrant dichotomy had been reinforced by recent colonial policies and policy reversals, at the time of the Malayan Union (1945–46) and Federation of Malaya (1948)

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- schemes, which had incorporated radically different notions of the relations of the various ethnic groups to the country. For a brief summary, see L A Mills, 'Malaya', in L A Mills et al, *The New World of Southeast Asia*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1949, pp 202-7.
- ³ See B H Farmer, *Ceylon: a divided nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, p 51.
- ⁴ See D L Horowitz, *Coup Theories and Officers' Motives: Sri Lanka in comparative perspective*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp 35-52.
- ⁵ *Utusan Melayu* (Singapore), 2 September 1955.
- ⁶ For the unwritten rules of the Malaysian coalition, see D L Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1985, pp 416-20.
- ⁷ For the Sri Lankan schemes and their effects, see C R de Silva, 'The politics of university admission: a review of some aspects of the admissions policy in Sri Lanka, 1971-1978', *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Science* 2 (1) June 1979, pp 85-123.
- ⁸ See S J Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: ethnic fratricide and the dismantling of democracy*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p 32. For the 1983 violence and its aftermath, see U Phadnis, 'Sri Lanka: crises of legitimacy and integration', in L Diamond et al (ed), *Democracy in Developing Countries* (3) Asia, London: Adamantine Press, 1989, p 167-70.
- ⁹ There was also insurrectionary violence in the Sinhalese south that made electoral conditions abnormal there as well.
- ¹⁰ S Rachagan, 'The development of the electoral system', in H Crouch, Lee Kam Hing and M Ong (eds), *Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp 271-79.
- ¹¹ The Sri Lankan percentages are computed from *Report of the Delimitation Commission, 1976*, Sessional Paper No 1 of 1976, Colombo: Government Publications Bureau, 1976, pp 12-238. The Malaysian percentages are based on unpublished constituency figures provided to me in 1967-68 from Malaysian Chinese Association files.
- ¹² See K von Vorssy, *Democracy without Consensus*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975, pp 396-7.
- ¹³ For an early overview, see R S Milne, 'The politics of Malaysia's new economic policy', *Pacific Affairs* 49 (2) summer 1976, pp 235-62. For a recent assessment, see D L Horowitz, 'Cause and consequence in public policy theory: ethnic policy and system transformation in Malaysia', *Policy Sciences* 22 (2-3) spring/summer 1989.
- ¹⁴ For these provisions, see D L Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp 635-8.

Malaysia's New Economic Policy and national unity

Malaysian society and culture has been dominated by racial and ethnic preoccupations. It is widely agreed in Malaysia today that the greatest threat to stability, especially since the late 1960s, has been inter-ethnic disharmony. Despite almost three decades of independence, genuine national unity remains more distant than ever before. The very policies promulgated to achieve this goal—such as the New Economic Policy (NEP) and National Culture Policy—seem to be ensuring that national unity will be more unrealisable than ever. In different spheres of public life, few genuinely multi-ethnic or non-ethnic institutions have developed.

In the economy, peasant agriculture remains primarily Malay, while the public services, public enterprise and statutory bodies have become increasingly Malay domains. And despite significant Malay inroads into the private sector (often at the expense of established non-Malay interests), the powerful private sector is still popularly perceived as a Chinese domain. While nominally multi-racial political parties exist, only those championing particular ethnic (including religious) interests are significant. Political issues are invariably blatantly ethnic, or have ethnic overtones, while career advancement in politics is generally contingent on effective identification with, or advocacy of, such issues. Major social organisations with significant followings, besides cultural and religious groups, are also ethnically based, including business associations, youth movements, women's associations and other societies.

Most Malaysians would no longer deny that deterioration in inter-ethnic relations began in the 1950s, and has been accelerating since the mid-1960s. It is clearly evident on at least three fronts: economic, cultural and political. Although involving many non-ethnic dimensions, it is the ethnic dimensions of these developments which have received most public and political attention. The suppression of the left in the post-war period meant the virtual elimination of non-ethnic ideological discourse. Ethnicity has increasingly dominated Malaysian political culture, especially since the late 1960s.

On the economic front, different endowments of wealth (including capital and land), experience, aptitude and opportunity have heightened

income and wealth differences between classes. With different ethnic representation in these classes, reinforced by ethnic differences in educational levels and location (urban-rural), as well as cultural preferences and prejudice, it is not surprising that economic competition has been at the core of inter-ethnic disharmony. While ethnic solutions have supposedly not succeeded in achieving greater harmony, they have had tremendous popular appeal, while also advancing the interests of the political elites of the various ethnic communities. The deteriorating economic situation in 1985-86 probably played a part in worsening intra-ethnic relations. However, it also contributed to greater intra-ethnic strife, as evidenced in the split in the ruling United Malay National Organisation (UMNO).

Greater state intervention and ethnic discrimination have become mutually reinforcing, giving rise to dramatically different ethnically defined perceptions of the role of the state and the nature of government policies. In this context, different political rights (to citizenship, for example), representation (such as in elected legislative bodies) and access to privileges (dispensed by the state) have attained special significance, again cast in an ethnic light.

The segregation of the colonial period served the ethnic 'divide and rule' formula for stability. The state's new essentially assimilationist 'national culture' formula, announced in 1971, and the exclusivist implementation of the 1967 National Language Act in the 1970s only exacerbated the uneasy truce underlying the National Education Policy enunciated in the late 1950s. Official reluctance to accept non-Malay ethnic cultures has ironically allowed vulgar imitations of imported Anglo-American culture to emerge as 'the lowest common denominator of our cultural life'. The earlier emergence of shared cultural elements has been overtaken by 'non-sensitive' Western cultural hegemony dished out by the state-controlled mass media.

While assimilationist at one level, cultural segregation has been reinforced in practice, not least by the various religious revivals since the 1970s. At all levels of schooling, students, teachers and their families are constantly reminded of their separate ethnic and religious destinies. Ethnic ghettos form easily in ostensibly integrated institutions and few individuals manage to transcend their ethnicity. Many actually become more acutely conscious of and embittered by their experience, and the centrality of ethnic considerations. Rather than coming together, Malaysian cultural life has become ever more segre-

gated, reinforced by such religious and ethnic cultural revivals as the Islamic resurgence.

Many Malays still regard non-Malays as threatening aliens, insisting on official ethnic discrimination as necessary and desirable to reduce historical inter-ethnic inequities. Conversely, many non-Malays regard such policies as a convenient disguise for Malay 'master race' status at the expense of 'second class' non-Malay citizens. Economic prosperity and the claim that all ethnic groups are just as unhappy with the status quo are sometimes cynically invoked to justify existing policies.

The growing role of the state, especially since the NEP, has increased opportunities for various types of corruption. The phenomenon of money politics, for example, reflects the convergence of political and economic power, especially among the leadership of the major component parties of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. It is now widely believed that most new opportunities for wealth accumulation are crucially determined by political access, rather than entrepreneurial ability.

The experiences of the last three decades suggest that existing problems cannot be resolved by elitist inter-ethnic bargaining and compromise. There are two main reasons: ethnic demands are ultimately irreconcilable by nature; and the elites involved never fully represent the ethnic constituencies they claim to represent, but usually use these claims to protect and advance their own particular interests.

Consequently, what some claim to be the result of inter-ethnic compromise or consensus may actually involve elite consultation and interest. Communication across ethnic lines in Malaysia has been largely reduced to polite half-truths. The understandable reluctance to air differences in public has been reinforced by legal prohibition of discussion of officially designated 'sensitive' issues. This 'culture of silence' is actually only a surface calm over powerful and dangerous undercurrents which can only lead to disaster.

The recent experiences of many other multi-ethnic societies have culminated in severe civil disturbances. For example, in the Phillipines is the Moro conflict; in Indonesia, Aceh, Irian Jaya and East Timor; in Sri Lanka, Jaffna; in India, Punjab, Assam; in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Baluchistan; in Iran and Iraq, Kurdistan; in Ethiopia, Eritrea and in Nigeria, Biafra. These conflicts remind us that there is a 'point of no return' which most people do not recognise until it is too late, and that beyond such a point different ethnic communities no longer believe it

possible and desirable to live together. Hence they reject what might otherwise be acceptable solutions.

The great difficulty and challenge is that no partial solutions can work. They may conceal, postpone or even displace specific problems, but ultimately only a comprehensive alternative can work. For instance, one cannot wish away ethnic discrimination without tackling the existing problem of inter-ethnic inequalities and prejudice to which discriminatory policies and actions respond.

It is now increasingly clear that the ruling Barisan Nasional—especially the major component parties identified with the old Alliance—thrives on communal politics. In a sense, inter-ethnic cleavages and competition are almost its *raison d'être*. With pretensions of an inter-ethnic consensus as its basis, powerful vested interests have been able to advance their particular interests with state support and protection. This has in turn contributed to the current economic malaise. In so far as the roots of the economic situation are political, its solution must also necessarily be of a political-economic nature.

In this connection, several recent developments in the electoral opposition deserve special attention. Under its new leadership, and especially since 1984, the PAS (Islamic Party) has emphasised its opposition to *assabiyah* (ethnic chauvinism in the Malaysian context). This contrasts sharply with its previous identification of Islam with Malayness. Needless to say, this undercuts and negates UMNO's claims that their more Malay 'extremist' postures are necessitated by such pressures from the PAS. Secondly, the PAS began to articulate a more 'populist' approach to Islam, for example by emphasising the need for the *mustadh'afin* ('the meek') to unite to struggle for truth, justice and freedom against the corrupt tyranny and exploitation of the *mustakbirin* ('the powerful'). This recent populist commitment and the rejection of *assabiyah*, coupled with some willingness to work with non-Islamic opposition parties and groupings on a universalist, populist and multi-ethnic basis, may yet prove to be a significant turning point in Malaysian politics. Such an initiative could well pave the way for a broad opposition front, or at least an electoral choice between the BN coalition and a populist alternative. The independent political organisation of Mahathir's erstwhile UMNO rivals since early 1988 has given unexpected momentum to such a possibility.

If well organised and led, such a populist coalition could even attract some of the more dissatisfied minor partners in the BN coalition, those less right wing and less closely identified with major business interests

requiring heavy state support and protection. In fact, if it should prove able to defeat the BN at the national level and open its doors to the populist elements still in the BN, it would be able to forge a broad populist and democratic coalition pursuing some radically different and more broadly acceptable development strategies in the crucial economic and cultural spheres. This would create a more viable basis for inter-ethnic harmony and national unity. Assuming that it is allowed to emerge, even if it fails to capture power electorally, its presence could radically transform the Malaysian political scenario and provide some countervailing checks and balances, possibly even discouraging ethnic politicking and opening the way to a more stable 'two-party' type system. And hence a new era in Malaysian politics. The PAS may not be able to lead an effective opposition to the BN (this role is likely to be undertaken by Tengku Razaleigh's faction, but there cannot be any effective opposition without the PAS).

However, parliamentary politics have become increasingly irrelevant to the fate of the people. As the current prime minister, Mahathir Mohammad, observed in 1970:

When it came to power, UMNO had more strength than it needed. The repeated disregard for intra-party criticism did not seriously impair its strength at first. But nevertheless the continuous whittling away of its mass support steadily told on its ability to garner sufficient support during elections. Secure in its absolute majority in Parliament, it was openly contemptuous of criticism. Policies were made which completely ignored public opinion. Typical of this was the decision to use Government funds to settle the cost of a private summons case when a Minister sued an opposition MP for slander. The decision was made after the case was lost. If the Minister had won he would no doubt have collected the damage awards. In the main, Parliamentary sittings were regarded as a pleasant formality which afforded members opportunities to be heard and quoted, but which would have absolutely no effect on the course of the Government. The general feeling was that whether or not the Parliament sat, the Government would carry on. The sittings were a concession to a superfluous democratic practice. Its main value lay in the opportunity to flaunt Government strength. Off and on, this strength was used to change the constitution. The manner, the frequency and the trivial reasons for altering the constitution reduced this supreme law of the nation to a useless scrap of paper.

(This passage is quoted from M Mahathir, *The Malay Dilemma*, Kuala Lumpur: Federal Publications, 1970, pp 10-11. The book, banned for a time, was written shortly before Mahathir was expelled from UMNO after the May 1969 events.)

Almost two decades later, these words seem like an understatement of the current status quo.

Political contradictions

The cycles and crises which have beset the Malaysian economy suggest that state planning has little control over the economy. Unless one believes that economic policy decisions are made independently of any constraints, and that policy-makers are stupid and systematically repeat the same mistakes, then one has to recognise that certain imperatives influence and may even force policy-makers into making their decisions. To understand these influences one must refer to the contradictions of Malaysian politics, society and economy.

In the 1980s, the effects of Malaysia's 'structural' problems have been superimposed upon the more familiar cyclical crisis. The incapacity of Malaysian policy-makers to overcome this crisis should not be primarily attributed to incompetence, as has been suggested by some dissidents in their challenge to the incumbent UMNO leadership in April 1987, and by some other technocratic critics of the Mahathir administration. Instead, the failure is the product of objective contradictions. In order to overcome them or to reduce their effects, it would be necessary to take appropriate action to transform economic relations fundamentally. The fact that policy-makers do not act freely, but are constrained by the contradictions of the system as well as by their own interests, renders them incapable of taking the steps necessary to overcome the roots of the economic malaise. The half-measures they are taking are not enough to overcome the problem because their intent is too short term and their effects are too limited.

Neither should the limitations of the measures taken by the Malaysian government be attributed solely to the ideological perspectives of policy-makers; rather, they result primarily from the contradictions in which they find themselves. The gravity of the situation has already engendered social, economic and political changes, as well as altered relations among economic interests and political forces. This has pushed the leadership into modifying its economic policies with the hope of overcoming the malaise.

It is generally agreed that Malaysian economic policy-making changed rather drastically in the aftermath of the race riots and UMNO palace coup associated with 13 May 1969. While government policy before the NEP was generally considered to be *laissez faire* in approach,

and responsive to, as well as supportive of, both foreign and domestic (predominantly Chinese) private sector interests, the 1970s were characterised by growing state intervention, primarily in favour of the nascent Malay bourgeoisie. While such intervention generally did not threaten capitalism *per se*, particular capitalist interests—usually Chinese or foreign—have been threatened at various times. Seen against this background, Mahathir's economic policies in the 1980s suggest efforts to retreat from the excesses of 1970s-type state interventionism. Privatisation, 'Malaysia Incorporated', deregulation and 'concessions in and suspension of NEP implementation' are means which have been employed to effect such a retreat.

The experience of the 1980s has also highlighted the limits of state intervention in the context of Malaysian capitalism. Though the Malaysian export-led growth engine has run into poor commodity markets and protectionist barriers, development strategy continues to be export-oriented: policy-makers will not undertake redistributive measures which can substantially expand the domestic market, thus providing the basis for a different, more nationally-oriented, development strategy. In the early 1980s deflationary pressures were fought off by massive increases in public development expenditure. To compensate for the deterioration in the balance of payments and to finance the growing budgetary deficits, the government rapidly increased the public debt, especially foreign borrowings. Even after government development expenditure was cut from mid-1982, government-guaranteed foreign borrowings continued to grow rapidly until 1984, mainly to finance investments in government-owned and controlled non-financial public enterprises (NFPEs)—previously known as off-budget agencies (OBAS)—in large part involved in developing new heavy industries.

With growing state intervention it has been very tempting to relate various government policy initiatives to specific business interests associated with leading politicians. In fact, it is openly acknowledged that business interests exert a greater influence on politics than in recent Malaysian history. For instance, at the 1987 general assembly of UMNO (the dominant partner in the ruling coalition) about half the delegates were businessmen. Limited preliminary investigations into the Bumi-putra Malaysian Finance (BMF) scandal in Hong Kong in the early 1980s—which resulted in losses of about \$2.5 billion—have implicated major UMNO leaders from both factions. Rumours are rife about corruption in high places involving most public sector projects, major and minor, though political power and influence are widely believed to

provide protection against prosecution, let alone conviction. A very close associate of the prime minister, Daim Zainuddin (who had no previous cabinet or government experience, but had developed a considerable reputation as successful businessman when he was appointed UMNO treasurer and finance minister in mid-1984), has become the focus of much resentment in political and business circles. In August 1986, Tan Koon Swan resigned as president of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) (by now ranked a poor second to UMNO in the ruling BN coalition) after admitting to fraudulent business malpractices and being convicted in Singapore. In early 1988 he was declared bankrupt soon after being convicted by the Malaysian court for criminal breach of trust in connection with his mismanagement of funds belonging to Multi-Purpose Holdings (MPH) controlled by the MCA through its cooperative, Koperasi Serbaguna Malaysia. Some of his closest associates have been convicted on similar charges involving the abuse of their control of various deposit-taking cooperatives, conveniently only exposed publicly right after the August 1986 general elections. He had been elected MCA president by about four-fifths of the delegates in November 1985 after rising to prominence over the last decade as a Chinese business leader, and particularly for his management of MPH. Tee Ann Chuan, then president of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), another BN coalition partner, is now in jail after similarly pleading guilty to fraudulent business practices in Malaysia in late 1986. In mid-1986 Samy Vellu, the president of the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), another BN coalition partner, publicly advocated and defended the close relationship between politics and business.

Many leading government politicians have openly acknowledged the growing influence and abuse of 'money politics', corruption as well as other consequences and manifestations of the increasing convergence of business and political power. Most observers would agree that much recent wealth in Malaysia is political rather than entrepreneurial in origin. It is widely taken for granted that most, if not all, businessmen politicians and politically well-connected businessmen have secured business advantages from new public sector economics projects and policies and personal political connections.

Yet it would be both simplistic and misleading to explain away recent policies as simply reflecting the interests of the politically influential beneficiaries concerned. While such interests have undoubtedly tended to dominate the actual implementation of many economic policies, there have been at least two other major influences deserving attention.

Firstly, the massive increase in foreign borrowings in the early 1980s and the great expectations, at least in official circles, of greatly increased foreign investment (to revive currently flagging economic fortunes) have rendered the Malaysian economy and government economic policy-making far more vulnerable to foreign influence (especially by multi-lateral agencies, such as the IMF and the World Bank, which can strongly affect Malaysia's international credit and investment rating). Many recent deflationary policies and efforts at deregulatory as well as other policies—such as privatisation, continued export-led growth (especially industrialisation), and greater hopes for private direct foreign investment—should be seen in this light.

Secondly, it is important to appreciate some of the characteristics of the Malaysian state, especially those explaining the limited autonomy of and constraints upon it, as reflected in some important government policies. Rooted in Malaysian class formation from the colonial period with its complex ethnic dimensions, the crucial extension of Malay political dominance after May 1969 (as reflected in the implementation of the NEP) explains various economic initiatives in the 1970s which did not reflect the interests of the major existing blocks of capital. Yet, while Malay dominance provided the impetus for a growing government role, the momentum of state interventionism was also encouraged by the enhanced powers and influence of bureaucrats, politicians and even politically well-connected businessmen. Yet, ironically, the apparent retreat from the heavy-handed state interventionism of the 1970s has been possible precisely because enhanced state powers and the changing nature of the state have facilitated the increasing concentration of powers in executive hands under Mahathir's leadership. In these circumstances Mahathir seems committed to accelerating capitalist growth and industrialisation in Malaysia under (supposedly) temporary foreign auspices, while hoping to pave the way for eventual domination by private Bumiputra capital. Ironically, with increasing authoritarianism and repression from October 1987 (to curb and discourage a broad range of dissent and to undermine a formidable challenge from within the dominant UMNO), and perhaps after the virtual failure to revive foreign investment inflows sufficiently, the Mahathir regime began making important conciliatory gestures to domestic Chinese capital. Besides being too little and too late, such efforts, constrained by UMNO's ethnic political base, may also fail because of the political uncertainties caused by the increased authoritarianism that is especially important to ethnic minorities, and by unprecedented political infigh-

ing among the Malay elite. Such failure may cause yet another swing towards disfavouring Chinese business interests, only confirming ethnic Chinese fears about political uncertainty.

Past performance of the NEP

The debate over the future of Malaysian economic policy after 1990 has recently resurfaced, causing considerable concern in various quarters. Future economic policies are probably not going to be decided by the needs of the masses, but are more likely to reflect the desires of those in power and others of influence, including foreign economic advisers, who usually represent the interests of transitional corporations and international agencies. Of course, to minimise popular opposition, economic policy after 1990 will be dressed up to maximise public acceptance.

In view of economic policy shifts since the mid-1980s and recent government priorities, future economic policy will continue to emphasise rapid growth, especially industrialisation, and greater reliance on market forces. If the interests of private capitalists, especially foreign investors, are given free rein, the masses—especially wage labour, who comprise the majority of the labour force, including Malays—will become the main victims, especially when export-led growth, contingent on cheap labour, is emphasised.

But what about achievement of the objectives of the NEP since it was announced in the early 1970s? The NEP was announced after the events of 13 May 1969, as one of several efforts to achieve national unity in view of the socio-economic inequality inherited from the colonial period and consolidated in the post-independence years. The NEP's national unity objective is to be achieved through its two 'prongs': eradicating poverty regardless of race, and restructuring society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function. An Outline Perspective Plan (OPP) for 1970-90 identified medium and long-term targets *en route* to 1990 for both NEP objectives. According to available government statistics on NEP implementation, it appears that the OPP targets have, by and large, been achieved.

The OPP forecast that the official poverty level should be reduced from 49 per cent in 1969 to 16 per cent in 1990. According to the Fifth Malaysian Plan, the poverty rate had been reduced to 18 per cent by 1984. More recently, a senior government official announced that this had been further reduced to 17 per cent by 1987. Hence, the OPP target of 16 per cent by 1990 seems quite achievable.

In view of the generally rapid growth of the Malaysian economy throughout most of the 1970s and part of the 1980s, poverty (as defined by the government) could have been completely eradicated if more just and effective redistributive policies had been implemented, government waste minimised, and if government allocations ostensibly for poverty eradication had not been used to enrich politicians and contractors securing rural projects.

Government occupational statistics also suggest that employment restructuring has, generally speaking, been achieved. Since the mid-1980s the demands of Bumiputraisim have given way to emphasis on growth, which strengthened Bumiputraisim, but led to its seeing itself increasingly under siege. In fact, Bumiputra employment in the public sector and agriculture greatly exceeds their overall demographic share. According to the World Bank, government remuneration is, on average, about 25 per cent higher than in the private sector. However, Bumiputras are still under-represented in some of the most lucrative professions such as medicine, accountancy and architecture. Much of this is transitional, however, and will decline as the population/employment restructuring goals will, on the whole, be achieved by 1990.

However, wealth restructuring, particularly the 30 per cent target for Bumiputra share ownership by 1990, remains the main obsession in most discussions about the NEP. The most frequently cited government statistics mislead by suggesting a serious shortfall, with Bumiputra ownership stuck at around 18 per cent in both 1983 and 1985. In the mid-1980s, Mahathir announced to foreign investors and the Malaysian Chinese public (through the Chinese press) that NEP targets, particularly the 30 per cent objective, had been suspended in view of the economic recession in the mid-1980s.

In fact, Bumiputra share ownership is much higher than suggested by these government statistics. For example, the Bumiputra percentage does not include shares owned by those who use nominee companies and other such devices obscuring the identity of the owner. Conversely, all such shares are considered by the government to belong exclusively to non-Bumiputra Malaysian residents, whereas such shares are also owned by Bumiputra as well as foreign residents. In fact, they are more likely to be owned by Bumiputra individuals, especially politicians, who wish to obscure their business interests. But if we assume that these shares are divided according to the known proportions, then the Bumiputra share would rise to at least 25 per cent. Since it is considered that Malaysian residents, especially Bumiputra politicians and senior

civil servants, are more likely to use nominees, the percentage is probably slightly higher.

These figures, however, only consider nominal share values, whereas an estimate of the distribution of wealth held in shares should consider market values. Of course, there are many problems in estimating such market values, but then it is only such estimates which are meaningful. Since Bumiputra and foreign share ownership tends to be concentrated in the larger, more successful firms which have been able to restructure to meet government guidelines, it is likely that the actual market value of shares held by non-Bumiputra residents is proportionately less than nominal share ownership, whereas Bumiputra and foreign wealth would be considerably higher. Hence, it is quite possible that the 30 per cent Bumiputra wealth ownership target has been achieved, and that this can be shown by the government if it chooses to do so.

It should be emphasised that the distribution of share ownership does not accurately reflect wealth ownership in Malaysia, especially non-corporate wealth. Similarly, the assets of foreign branches and subsidiaries in Malaysia have been ignored by such calculations. Hence it is likely that foreign wealth and wealth-generating capacity in Malaysia have been significantly underestimated by government statistics.

But the question of wealth ownership, whether share capital or other wealth, only involves the interests of a small elite. For instance, it has been shown that although 45 per cent of adult Bumiputras own national unit trust (ASN) shares, only 1.3 per cent own 75 per cent of total ASN shares. Such concentration is even more pronounced in the rest of the economy in view of government efforts to promote the ASN scheme and the \$50,000 limit for ASN shares per Bumiputra.

Consequently, the Malaysian government can now choose whether or not to announce that the NEP objectives (or, more precisely, the OPP targets) have been achieved. In doing so, the government could make a clean break with existing policy. The more likely alternative is a continuation of the NEP with some changes, perhaps a new name and greater emphasis on growth and industrialisation. Although business and political interests which have benefited from NEP implementation desire the latter alternative, the government would lose a golden opportunity to leave behind the considerable problems inherited with NEP implementation, including the ethnic polarisation which undermines the very purpose of the NEP itself.

Whether or not the government decides on a new policy or merely to

revise the NEP, it remains unclear whether either would ensure improved welfare and justice for the Malaysian people. In view of recent trends (which have mainly benefited the private sector, especially foreign investors) it is crucial that an open reasoned debate emerges to enhance the welfare of ordinary people—whether they live above or below the poverty line—in order that their interests are not neglected in the current obsession with achieving Newly Industrialising Country (NIC) status.

Prospects for growth

The circumstances and outlook for the Malaysian economy in mid-1988 are generally considered to be improving, at least for the time being. Owing to the open nature of the Malaysian economy, it has been past practice to predict an economic upturn following recovery of the OECD economies, especially that of the USA. However, the generally poorer economic performance of the developing countries compared to the industrial economies in the 1980s has been ominous for prospects of recovery in Malaysia. Interestingly, it has become almost a cliché in Malaysia after the experiences of the early and mid-1980s to take this as a sign that the recent recessions have not merely been cyclical, but also structural in nature. Perhaps most disturbing is the persuasive proposition that OECD economic recovery will increasingly have to be at the expense of the South, especially in terms of keeping low primary commodity prices, rather than supportive of recovery in the South as presumed by global Keynesianism. Thus, it is envisaged that while high and growing unemployment will keep wages down, the glut of commodities will keep their prices low. Almost all Malaysia's relatively diversified primary commodity exports have suffered depressed prices in 1985–86. Despite price rises since then, general commodity price levels in 1987–88 are still well below levels in the late 1970s. Low prices will certainly continue to have an adverse effect upon Malaysia's economic growth and its merchandise account, and hence its overall balance of payments. Further, while OECD economic recovery has not resulted in corresponding recovery for the primary commodity exporting economies of the South, it is unclear what measures will. The likelihood of organising producer cartels in the present difficult economic climate (let alone of their success) is remote, especially in view of the continuing massive supply overhangs for many commodities.

The prospects for the domestic engines of Malaysian growth are not

much better, not least because most of them rely on export markets. As far as most of the primary commodities are concerned, the major problems do not rest with supply. However, for continued export-led economic expansion Malaysia desperately needs new investments, technology and market access, especially for manufacturers. Private investments from abroad are supposed to sustain capital inflows, provided earlier by foreign borrowings in the early 1980s. For ethno-political as well as economic reasons, the Malaysian government has been favouring foreign investment, rather than predominantly Chinese domestic investment. If successful, this strategy will further enhance foreign capital's dominance of Malaysian industry, further subordinating the state and Malay capital. However, in view of recent international investment opportunities and trends, as well as the still over-regulated domestic environment (largely due to government intervention inspired by ethnic political considerations) it is unlikely that the massive foreign investments desired will be forthcoming in the amounts desired. The government might then be tempted either to resort to foreign borrowings once again (lured by the negative interest rate in 1987), or open the oil tap further, or cut down the forest even faster, as happened in 1987. Needless to say, these options do not really offer sustainable, long-term solutions to the fundamental problems of the Malaysian economy, but the time horizons and interests of the relevant policy-makers cannot be relied upon to find such solutions.

Things look bleak, especially since there appears to be no viable alternative on the horizon to the status quo. Perhaps that is why there has been such unprecedented and widespread enthusiasm, especially in elite and middle class circles, for the so-called 'B Team' which has been openly challenging Mahathir's 'A Team' for the UMNO leadership since early 1987. But the 'B Team' has not offered any significant policy alternatives beyond changes in leadership style and rhetoric.

Perhaps most importantly, there is a serious rift within the Malay elite, due to the continuing growth of the aspiring Malay bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie under the NEP, limited profitable business opportunities due to uncertain conditions, deflationary policies, growing exclusiveness in political patronage, the shrinking public sector, reduced state intervention and sharpened factional conflict. A related, but no less important issue has been the question of factional alignments, with the 'B Team' supposedly preferred by Western interests as well as most Chinese Malaysian business interests (the 'A Team' is popularly believed to favour Japanese and South Korean interests in particular

and foreign interests in exclusive collaboration with Malay business interests). It seems likely that this breach in Malay ruling circles will continue for some time to come, encouraged by the continuing inability to resolve the underlying contradictions, compounded by the very inertia of personality-based political factionalism, the discreet but active support of other interests involved and the absence of a serious challenge to continuing UMNO hegemony.

The apparent centrality of the ethnic divide in Malaysian life seems to have subordinated other issues, including ideological differences. It seems impossible, for example, to organise widely on an ideological basis transcending ethnic boundaries, especially between Malays and non-Malays. On the other hand, Malaysians are quite aware of and sensitive to class and other related differences in the nation as a whole and within their own ethnic communities.

The considerable tension between labour/peasantry and the state is blunted by the fact that the peasantry is almost entirely ethnic Malay and the issues raised by them involve sub-sectors rather than the peasantry as a whole (there is no independent peasant organisation). Although wage labour comprises the majority of the labour force, only one-sixth (mainly from the public sector) is unionised. Labour has come under tremendous pressure in recent years, but its struggles have been largely defensive, to prevent further erosion of its limited rights. Furthermore, racial and religious ideologies strongly influence the peasantry and the working class.

In this situation the main source of the strength of the elites of each ethnic community has been their ability to persuade the rest of their communities, with varying degrees of success, that they are effectively protecting, if not actually advancing their interests. The main organised challenges to this in recent years have been led by petty bourgeois or middle-class elements promising to enhance the interests of the non-elites. Thus far, however, the main thrust of criticism by these opposition elements has centred on obvious abuses of political power, especially growing corruption and increasing limitations of political rights and freedoms. More liberal political conditions are promised, with economic alternatives expressed in similarly vague rhetorical terms. This vagueness not only reflects the ambiguous ideological basis of middle-class oppositions, but also their efforts to appeal to as wide a constituency as possible and to respond within the ideological parameters defined by the state.

In these difficult circumstances, the priority must be to identify the

principled basis for a viable trans-ethnic popular alternative to the status quo. Progressive elements could initiate efforts to build a new coalition of popular forces. Such efforts would have to take into account the existing constellation of political forces (as well as the social and economic bases of these forces) besides confronting the challenges raised by three decades of unbalanced, unstable and inequitable growth since political decolonisation in 1957. It is increasingly clear that such development is unsustainable, and has also engendered untenable socio-political contradictions which are disintegrating, rather than uniting the still nascent Malaysian nation.

For various historical reasons, important tasks on the nationalist agenda are far from complete. In the Malaysian context, the term 'nationalist' is usually associated with narrow ethnic chauvinism of various kinds. Nonetheless, a genuinely patriotic impulse is badly needed - despite more than three decades of formal independence—to complete the tasks of economic, cultural and political decolonisation, and to enhance efforts to build the still forming Malaysian nation.

While many obstacles and problems could come in the way of such an economic programme, it is of some comfort to note that the task of enhancing economic justice is complementary to efforts to achieve more balanced and integrated national economic growth, since more equitable income distribution would extend and deepen the national market, thus expanding the scope for economies of scale. This connection underlines the significance and urgency of developing an alternative to the status quo, which is not only unsustainable economically, but also unstable and dangerous socially and politically.

The NEP: an alternative interpretation

Since there is general agreement that the two prongs of the NEP respond, in a particular fashion, to some of the major sources of socio-economic conflict in contemporary Malaysian society, alternative interpretations of the NEP goals can be suggested. Much of Malaysian political debate in the last two decades has been concerned with interpreting paths to national unity and the eradication of poverty.

First, poverty eradication measures should address the roots of income inequality, rather than be guided by some arbitrarily defined poverty line. A more equitable distributive principle would be one based on work effort, rather than property ownership. Existing gaps in the wage structure should also be reduced considerably, while income

derived from title, position, privilege, corruption and property (including capital and land) should be minimised (reference here is to income-generating wealth or property rather than personal property 'for consumption'). Those with property worked by others should not enjoy excessive incomes from such holdings. Such changes would favour the hard-working, and would necessarily threaten the interests of rentiers who live well off others. However, public facilities should be made available to those less capable of being productive, such as children, the aged, the sick and the handicapped.

It should be emphasised that absolute equality of incomes is not feasible in the short run and should not be the immediate goal of such measures. Income differentials will exist and cannot be completely eliminated in view of continuing differentials in the social value of individual work and the continued need for material work incentives, whether of an individual or collective nature. Nevertheless, existing wealth and income inequalities are neither necessary for economic development nor socially just by any ethical criteria.

For the peasantry, land continues to be the primary means of production, and in the Malaysian situation two measures are important in this regard. Development of new agricultural land—on less economically burdensome terms to settlers than *Felda's*—is still greatly needed for land-hungry peasants. Contemporary land hunger is actually the outcome of colonial land law and policies affecting land ownership. In addition, new arrangements affecting cultivated land are needed to overcome land tenancy and other related problems which persist due to the lack of commitment to fundamental agrarian institutional reform, exemplified for instance, by the virtual non-implementation of the various laws affecting tenancy on padi land. 'Restructuring' in this area should recognise long-term considerations, including viable farm land sizes and agricultural productivity. Measures which can be considered include collective or cooperative agriculture on relatively larger farms which should at least be as productive and efficient as estates and large farms.

Large enterprises, especially foreign-controlled ones, should be run by workers on a cooperative basis, along lines inspired by 'economic democracy'. With such measures, nationalism will not merely benefit the new managers and others in charge, as under 'state capitalism'. If absolute equalisation of the wage scale is undertaken immediately, it is likely that many technicians, professionals and skilled workers would no longer earnestly contribute to enterprise progress; however, existing differentials in a particular enterprise can be reduced considerably as

part of a series of similar measures undertaken on an economy-wide basis. New enterprises organised on a genuinely cooperative basis should be encouraged. In this regard, we should understand the reasons for the fiascos in the contemporary cooperative movement, including the difficulties of developing such enterprises in a capitalist environment which encourages individual greed while discouraging group cooperation for collective needs.

A great many other initiatives will, of course, be necessary to develop a more just and self-reliant economy. These measures should be coordinated through a comprehensive and decentralised planning process—planning will have to be undertaken at all levels of the economy and should involve all parties (especially the productive classes), not merely a clique of planners. Efforts to develop a self-reliant economy should take into account the country's economic heritage, including the strengths and weaknesses of uneven development processes under colonialism. In this connection, it must be recognised that the path to self-reliance is a difficult one, especially in an open and dependent economy. Hence, the planning task becomes especially difficult and crucial. However, by identifying and understanding the main weaknesses of our economy (for example the weak links between agriculture and industry, the disparities between rice and export-oriented agriculture, or those between West and East Coasts), the measures necessary to overcome them can be found.

In conclusion, it needs to be emphasised that while the road to economic liberation and justice is fraught with difficulty, the alternative is continued inequality, and perhaps more ominously, heightened and unresolvable ethnic conflict. The alternative outlined above does not claim not to threaten certain privileged interests, but it offers a means for resolving the most pressing and fundamental economic problems facing the country today through genuine restructuring. In this way a just and self-reliant new national economic order could be established that would be acceptable to the vast majority of the population, especially its productive members.

Identity and ideology in Pakistan: an interview

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Shahid Qadir interviewed Akbar Ahmed in London in July 1989.

Shahid Qadir: *What do you see as the main reasons for the resilience of race and religion in the communal politics of all of South Asia, not just Pakistan?*

Akbar Ahmed: Social scientists like Clifford Geertz have noted the importance of ethnic identity in South Asia, based on race, language and custom. In the last decade we have witnessed a sharp increase in ethnicity leading to severe political tensions—for example, the Sikhs in India, the Sindhis in Pakistan, the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The main reasons lie in the relationship of the centre or state with its minority groups and the intolerant environment prevalent in the region.

The important point is to recognise that there were distinct structural and historical features in South Asian society well before the independence of India and Pakistan, which sharply identified the existence of race and caste in society. Then came the desire of communities like the Muslims in South Asia to establish its identity. This goes back one to two centuries to the Faraizi movement in what then became East Pakistan (eventually Bangladesh), to the Barailvi movement, based in Peshawar in what then became West Pakistan. There were attempts by the Sind to break away from Bombay and the strivings of the Bengali Muslims for their own identity leading to their own province at the turn of this century.

It is simplistic to assume that there was one social structure, one

tribal structure when Pakistan was created in 1947. In fact this was not so, there were at least four separate socio-ethnic categories. First, there were the tribal groups living in what is now Pakistan, mainly in the Frontier Province and Baluchistan, though also in the Punjab and the Sind to an extent. These tribes are distinct and conduct themselves according to a defined code that goes back centuries. They perceived the world through tribal eyes; honour, revenge, hospitality were the main features of the tribes. The regions which they occupied were generally inaccessible and materially poor. There were few schools or development schemes in these areas.

Another distinct category in Pakistan is peasant agricultural society based largely in the Punjab, but increasingly expanding into the Frontier Province and even parts of Sind. This is a characteristic kind of society based upon the village. The village is defined and self-sufficient. It tends to be exploited by the state apparatus, the police official or the revenue official. A kind of work ethic and an energetic desire of the peasant farmer for material wellbeing permeates society.

The third distinct but not very well developed category is urban society. Karachi was a small town in 1947, Lahore really a provincial headquarters, and Peshawar and Quetta small cantonment towns. Today 30 per cent of the entire population of Pakistan is urban. So you can see how this category has grown since 1947, creating tremendous pressure on the urban infrastructure.

The fourth category which we can identify as quite distinct from the other social and ethnic groups is the large influx of refugees coming from all over India. So 7 or 8 million people suddenly arrived from India, often with very little in common between them except the sense of 'refugeeness'.

Today, to make a comparison with 1947, we note that Pakistani society is characterised by certain features. Firstly, the great paradoxes in Pakistan society: on the one hand the economic growth of 8 per cent, the large-scale industries' growth rate of 10 per cent, the fact that Pakistan is a nation in the middle-income category of the World Bank (\$400 income per capita). And, on the other hand, the serious breakdown of law and order, use of drugs, falling educational standards, and widespread corruption. So here is one of the major paradoxes. Secondly, the complexity of society; at one end of the scale, the tribal structure which still exists in Pakistan (in many parts of Baluchistan, for instance, there are tribes which still do not have access to black-top roads or to drinking water), together with a highly sophisticated and aware urban

population in Karachi or Lahore. Thirdly, the fact of change. Pakistan society is undergoing rapid change. The entire political situation in late 1988 leading to the elections illustrates the kind of change that is taking place in Pakistan. The emergence of the Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz (MQM) is a good example. In a few years it emerged and swept the urban vote among the original refugees from India (Mohajir); it is indicative of this kind of change. Finally, and again paradoxically, the widespread belief in the major ethnic groups that they are deprived of their rights. Each group feels the other groups are doing them in, taking and eating more than their share of the cake. So in these categories we have the paradoxes, the complexity and change which characterise Pakistan society.

SQ: You have pointed out the historical roots of ethnic conflict in Pakistan, but isn't it true that various political analysts, be they Marxist or Western, have consistently maintained that ethnicity is not very important, that internationalisation of capital and culture will erode it, or that modernisation will lead it to its dilution. Can you expand as to how and where these theorists have gone wrong, and, given that the last decade has seen the increasing Islamisation of Pakistan, how is it that provincialism has not been swept by Islamic universalism?

AA: It is interesting that both the contemporary Marxist and Muslim perspectives at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum have the same blind spot, which is to assume that ethnicity either does not exist, or would wither away over time. This is ironical considering that both Marxism and Islam in their original texts clearly recognise ethnicity as a factor in society. Lenin, and even Stalin in the early years, was concerned with clarifying the question of the rights of nationalities in the USSR. Hence, the assumption of Marxist states that under Marxism ethnicity cannot exist or will die out with the dawning of the workers' paradise is doubly naive. Today we are witnessing tremendous ethnic resurgence and upheaval in the USSR, and obviously the authorities are caught completely off guard, and are unable to deal with it. The same is true of some other Marxist states in East Europe. Unless they come up with answers, Marxist states in the 1990s will begin to unravel under the strain of ethnicity. Similarly, Islamic analysts examine society as an ideal—as it should be, not as it is—and most of the literature simply dismisses ethnicity as non-existent. This is incorrect, because even in Pakistan, which is overwhelmingly Muslim, ethnicity is a crucial factor in political and social life. This is also true in Afghanistan and Iran, two neighbouring Muslim states. The Holy Prophet, in his saying

'there is no Bedouinism in Islam' clearly recognises there is ethnicity, but he emphasises that Islam is a universal ideology and hence that it transcends ethnicity. There are other *hadith* and Koranic verses on the subject which acknowledge its place in human organisation. For example, the holy Koran says in Surah 49, 'We have made you into nations and tribes so that you might know one another.' This blind spot is therefore curious.

Mainstream social scientists trained in America and Britain have traditionally analysed Pakistan society as if it possessed a uniform social structure with common social values. Ethnicity is reduced to a peripheral factor, and this carries into 'World Bank-US AID' kinds of assessments on Pakistan society, leading, I think, to serious conceptual and practical problems. At this level, from the headquarters in Washington or the capital in Islamabad, it is assumed that there is no such thing as ethnicity: whereas on the ground it very much exists.

SQ: *If we could turn to the use of Islam under the former General Zia. Is it not true that instead of ethnic strife diminishing during his Islamic rule, Zia's decade has only worsened ethnic relations, and do you think that Benazir will be able to heal the damage?*

AA: The question raises a whole host of interesting issues. Firstly, General Zia was not able to 'Islamise' Pakistan. He certainly made Pakistan and the wider world aware of some of the issues involved in Islamising a society. Towards the end he himself was acutely aware of his failure in attempting the Islamisation of Pakistan. Islam, as a consequence of the last decade, has begun to be identified with many of the more negative features in society, such as lashing, the cutting off of hands, the stoning of an illegitimate infant near a mosque, the disrobing of women (which took place in the Punjab) and so forth. The positive and permanent aspects of Islam have not been brought to the fore, the more permanent and fundamental aspects of Islam, such as the emphasis on piety, genuine humility, *ilm* (knowledge) and the respect for learning, as well as the encouragement of brotherhood and tolerance.

Pakistan is essentially a plural and multi-ethnic society. When the culture and ideology of one group is firmly and forcibly thrust upon other groups there is a natural and historic reaction against that particular ideology. There was, therefore, a general kind of resistance to Islamisation, largely due to the more negative aspects we have identified. If the more positive aspects had been emphasised, a more tolerant,

humanistic society might have evolved. Muslim society is complex and diverse, with many different aspects. The one that was emphasised over the last decade was harsh and rigorous. Muslim society is not a monolith: there are numerous groups and sects within Islam—and within them ethnicity allows different interpretations of some of the main features of the role of religious leadership, or the role of the mullahs, the religious functionaries, and so on.

It is worth remembering that it is not just the role of religion which has been the cause of structural weakness in Pakistan society. Let us look at some of the other contributing factors. A fundamental flaw has been the lack of education. Pakistan's education figures are appalling—even today the literacy rate is about 20 per cent. Pakistan society may well be regressing in this field. There is a general apathy towards learning and education. And apart from the obvious outside interference—which has devastating psychological consequences—in Pakistan's internal affairs, there is the repeated imposition of martial law which stifles or suspends all creativity and initiative in society.

However it is an exaggeration to state that ethnicity is the sole creation of martial law. Suspension of political parties and civil rights create a social vacuum into which rush ethnic forces. This is to some extent correct. But it is a simplification. Sri Lanka has had little truck with martial law and is yet torn apart by a vicious ethnic conflict. Other factors are important in its growth, for example, the demographic patterns of the groups. In Pakistan Punjabis constitute about 60 per cent of its 100 million people, and Baluchis about 5 per cent. Yet the area in which the former live is only 26 per cent of Pakistan and the latter 45 per cent; Punjabis must push out of their borders, as they have done. In their own province, Sindhis (just over 50 per cent of the population) complain that they do not want to become extinct like the 'Red Indians'. The Baluch, who are marginally more in number than the Pukhtun in Baluchistan, resent the Pukhtun Afghan refugees who may tilt the balance against them if they settled permanently. Each ethnic group in Pakistan feels cheated out of its rights and therefore frustrated.

There is also the bankrupt role of the intellectual who blindly supports his own ethnic group, no matter what the truth. The 'committed' intellectual courts cheap ethnic popularity. He succeeds in stoking ethnic fires as his arguments gain currency. Mischief between groups is thus created. Government, with its monopoly of the media, is also a culprit. By blocking out and blacking out all discussion of ethnicity in

an attempt to reinforce its 'nationalist' position, the government allows rumours and propaganda by interested groups to pass for truth. If unable to avoid mention completely, the official media euphemistically refers to ethnic clashes as those between 'factions'; the numbers of dead and injured are scaled down, facts of the incident are left deliberately vague.

All these features combine to create a society with rifts in it, a society with tension in it. Benazir Bhutto will only heal the wounds when she is not only aware of the tensions in society but does something about them. She has a Herculean task ahead of her. But she is young and conveys the optimism of youth. Her success—indeed survival—in office will depend on how well she controls these problems on the ground.

SQ: *Considering the fact that Islam has somewhat glossed over the ethnic factor, to what extent do you think that Islam is capable of healing the various ethnic divides in Pakistan of which we spoke earlier?*

AA: Islam has not glossed over ethnicity. As I pointed out, Islam recognises ethnicity, and in its place accepts it as a social fact. But Muslim analysts fail to see it. Islam has been identified in the recent past (in Pakistan and abroad) with great disruptive politics and barbaric influences on society. Examples of hand amputation and lashings abound. But on another level, let us go down to the rural areas, to the villages of Pakistan, and note Islam's role in the centres of learning, the Sufi centres. Here it has provided a platform in bringing people together and creating harmony. If you were to visit the shrines which are now centres of learning, often small academies, in Punjab or Sind or even Baluchistan you would see some very interesting things. For instance, many of the visitors at the shrine of Bahaudin Zakaria in Multan will be Sindhis. Also, at Shahbaz Qalandar's shrine in Sind you will note a lot of visitors from the Frontier Province and the Punjab. So, firstly, there is a healing factor at work here, the therapeutic effects of visiting a shrine, and secondly, a harmony created among ethnic groups. People do not see visitors as Punjabis or Sindhis, but simply as fellow believers in a more universal and more harmonious philosophy or ideology of brotherhood. In India you will note that the majority of the visitors to Ajmer Sharif are Hindus, such is the power of the Sufi saints to attract. Here is Islam acting as a healing force through its great scholars and its great saints.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency to dismiss much of this kind of activity as either primitive or as tribal, and not take it seriously. But for

people in the villages, for people in the rural areas, and for tribal groups, this is reality. The visit, the healing powers of the saints and the accessibility of the saints are what are real and what motivate people to a more harmonious awareness of others which overrides ethnic positions and ethnic hatred. Ultimately it boils down to the eternal motto of the Sufis, *sulh-i-kul*, or 'peace with all'.

SQ: *Perhaps we could turn to one of the constants in post-Bangladesh Pakistan—Punjab's dominance of Pakistan's ethnic map. Would you not agree that the more mellow and self-assured Punjabi nationalism of earlier decades is resurging into a more virulent and chauvinistic kind recently? Punjab seems to be getting whipped into an awareness of having a Sindhi head of central government.*

AA: This is again a complex question and raises a lot of interesting issues. First is the self-conscious role of the Punjab as the upholders of the ideology of Pakistan—which is an equation of Islam plus Urdu plus the Kashmir issue plus the glory of the Pakistan Defence Services. The ideology is defined in Islamabad with a base in the Punjab. Second, and leading from this, is how this translates into the administrative machinery of Pakistan, the civil services and the army, two of the most powerful and major institutions in Pakistan—in both the Punjab plays a dominant role. Thirdly, is the reaction to the Punjabi soldier-cum-farmer ethos in the other smaller provinces of Pakistan and their local ethnicities. Punjabi ethnicity has become articulate in the late 1980s and is a response to growing ethnic awareness in Baluchistan, in Sind, in the Frontier. It has taken interesting forms—theatre, articles and a revival of the Punjabi language itself. Fourthly, and most importantly, is the fact that Punjab society is fast becoming a distinct society within the rest of Pakistan—it is a more economically prosperous, socially stable society. The schools and the parks are much better, a visible middle class is emerging and wanting a better life. This class is based on small (five to ten acre) farms in the Punjab; sons of small farmers have risen to powerful positions in the military and the civil service.

The Sikhs in East Punjab had evolved a similarly distinct and prosperous society from the rest of India, based on agriculture as a result of the green revolution in the 1960s. This is what is happening in the Pakistani Punjab, feeding a kind of Punjabi nationalism which, in turn, exacerbates as it provokes a reaction in the other provinces. The sense of deprivation that exists in the smaller provinces is being heightened. Unfortunately, instead of provoking a healthy sense of competition, there is a feeling that Punjab, because it is so powerful and has the

largest population, has (to quote what will be heard in many of the smaller provinces) 'eaten us up' or 'exploited us'. This is a very defeatist kind of reaction, and it unfortunately feeds on rumours, on a sense of ethnic chauvinism which is usually sterile. In the end this negative feeling takes the form of secessionist ideas, which can lead in the extreme to irredentist movements.

SQ: *Are you saying that Punjabi prosperity is a healthy sign worthy of emulation, and therefore the other regions should not be jealous and that there is no case to be made here for a more equitable distribution of national resources?*

AA: No, what I am saying is that experience in South Asia tells us that when a specific zone begins in economic and social terms to 'take off', it generates two reactions; a feeling of wellbeing, pride and difference in the privileged province, and a sense of frustration, of envy if you like, in the less fortunate provinces. This happened in the Punjab in India, and eventually led to Sikh conflict with Delhi. Unfortunately a similar situation exists in Pakistan.

In order to avoid conflict, the standards of the smaller provinces must be brought up to the level of the Punjab standards, rather than the standards of the Punjab being brought down to the levels that exist in some parts of Pakistan.

SQ: *Moving on to the role of the military in Pakistan, your work continually points out the symbiotic alliance between the military and the civil service. Do you think that Benazir will be able to make inroads into this 'trusteeship' that the military and the bureaucracy hold over Pakistan's destiny?*

AA: Interference by the military and the civil services is in itself an obvious failure in democracy. I have tried to place the sociological links between the military and the civil service, which continue to over-see politics in Pakistan as they have done over long periods of its history, in the context of Pakistan society.

I would like to add here that we tend to be dismissive of both the military and the civil services—rightly when they are interfering in politics—but that both institutions have played a critically important role in providing continuity and stability to Pakistan in its times of crisis. For instance in the very act of creation in 1947 and onwards, their critical role is well documented. Men in the military and the civil services, were able to provide continuity in spite of personal hardships, ensuring the existence of the state. When politics begins to atrophy and decay these institutions assume power and a role which they are not

meant for. I think very few civil servants or military officers will actually support the interference of their services into the arena of politics. One is constantly reminded that it is something they do reluctantly. Of course once they do, the momentum and the sheer labyrinth in which they enter makes it very difficult for them to come out easily; history has shown us that leaders do not leave power easily unless they are deposed or assassinated or removed forcibly.

Benazir Bhutto's emergence is of course very significant because it acts as an important corrective, a balance, to the conservatism of the military and the bureaucracy. It is also interesting because she comes from the south, from Sind, and was educated abroad, at Harvard and Oxford, which allows her a wider perspective on issues. She will continue to be resisted by those elements of society which do not wish for change or are not prepared to experiment with new forms of leadership, such as a young, educated, female prime minister. Not only certain religious quarters but even many conservative groups in the Punjabi middle-class society will resist her. The danger is of her falling between two stools, of not being able to do much and, by not living up to the very high expectations, disappointing her followers. She faces a catch-22 situation.

SQ: You speak of continuity and stability as far as the contribution of the bureaucracy and the military are concerned. Could you explain why their ethnic composition seems to be regionally unrepresentative? I believe, for instance, that there are hardly any top-ranking Baluchis or Sindhis.

AA: First, let me clarify the position. Although the position you have depicted is true for the army it is not so in the civil services. It is precisely this imbalance which fuels the ethnic sense of deprivation in the smaller provinces. There are two or three reasons for this and we must analyse them in historical perspective. First of all, having worked in various parts of Pakistan, let me belie the widely-held notion that the only right officer is the one from the Punjab. This is a corruption of the incorrect 'martial races' thesis that the British created to recruit their colonial officers based on ethnic origins. This 'martial races' thesis should be confined to the dustbins of history. Secondly, the entrance requirements for the two services depend on competitive examinations. So a boy studying in Lahore in an English medium school would immediately be at an advantage. Also the fact that the Punjab has a network, an entire foundation and structure of better schools, a society more aware of the modern state and its organs—a modern ethos—definitely gives an

advantage to them over the other provinces. The case of the Frontier Province is instructive. Up to the 1960s Pathans would often complain about their absence from the civil services (of course, there was always a tradition of Pathan officers and generals in the military). Traditionally considered as backward, today the Frontier Province provides some of the top candidates in the civil services—often topping the lists. So the automatic assumption that the smaller provinces cannot compete is wrong. The third fact is that people from the smaller provinces will talk of nepotism—that once a Punjabi is in the army or civil services he often promotes his own group to the detriment of the others. But it also works the other way round since a person from a smaller province would very often tend to work along tribal or ethnic lines at the cost of merit. This is something that people from the Punjab have constantly pointed out: someone from one of the smaller provinces will go out of his way to favour his own tribesman at the cost of a better candidate. The whole argument about the quota system in the services is based precisely on this kind of thinking. Pakistan society still functions as a tribal society—often ethnicity and not merit therefore secures jobs and appointments. Paradoxically, the middle-class society in Punjab may be the only group insisting on merit and talent as criteria. When the competition is so fierce within the Punjab it really tends to produce what is best in terms of quality within the Punjab, further widening the gap between the Punjab and the other provinces.

SQ: *Having recently been a Commissioner in Baluchistan, and earlier a Political Agent in the Northwest Frontier, how legitimate are the provincial demands for autonomy? Could you elaborate on the 'genuine' versus the 'greedy' demands of the provinces. What reasons were there for the Baluchistan insurgency of the early 1970s and do you see any chance of anything similar happening again?*

AA: First of all, there has been a tendency, not only in Pakistan but in many of the post-colonial states in Africa and Asia, for the state to centralise. This happened in India, it is happening in Pakistan. Authority is drawn to the capital of the new nation, to the president or prime minister's office. Commands then flow out from these offices. At the provincial level this is also true, increasingly the power and authority of the deputy commissioner or commissioner is focused in the provincial capital. So there is a tendency to centralise, which must be resisted. Illiterate villagers bewildered and helpless, wasting energy and money to chase applications or files in Secretariat buildings are a familiar sight. They must have their problems solved nearer home.

There should be decentralisation and a greater amount of trust at the lower level. One way of doing this is to create a district council with genuine power and devolved authority. The history of district councils is a chequered one, often interrupted by martial law. This suspension ensures that the constant flow from the top downwards does not take place and authority is once again gathered and pushed up towards the centre. There is a need for autonomy at provincial and district levels. This has to be secured, and if not conceded will increase the social and political frustration.

Your second question was about the Baluchistan insurgency representing a push to political autonomy. It is important to point out that it was more a tribal response to the centre. I was in charge a decade later of the Marri and Bugti areas that were the focus of the insurgency. Many of the stories of resistance and rebellion that I heard were really to do with honour, with tribal concepts of looking at themselves rather than with sophisticated political argument. From the outside the movement was cast in the romantic frame of a Marxist tribal revolt led by a Sardar. There lies its paradox—the Sardar may have been well versed in Marxism but it was not a Marxist peasant or workers' revolt. It was a genuine and last attempt by two proud and honourable Baluch tribes (the Marri and the Bugti), to assert their own way of life and independence. They were confronting changing times, the harsh reality of the new world, and the power of the central state, and, in the context of our discussion, the competitiveness and aggressive drive of the Punjabis which they could not match. They took on all this through the centre and one of its instruments, the army. They acquitted themselves with great honour, and at one stage in the Marri area alone three divisions of the Pakistan army were operating. Now the Marri area is not large in a geographical sense and the tribe is small—about 100,000—but they fought honourably.

On whether this kind of insurgency can happen again or not, I am optimistic. Let us examine the facts: the same province of Baluchistan today is led by a Baluch governor, a Baluch chief minister, a Baluch chief secretary. The provincial secretaries and commissioners, barring one or two, are also from Baluchistan. Unlike the earlier period the key players are all Baluch. As they work within the idiom of Baluchistan society, they understand and are therefore capable of containing any development of this kind which could eventually become a tribal war. There are institutions within the tribe, of the *jirgah* (council) of elders, which can mediate at the time of crisis, and can be called upon

to resolve issues. Another factor discouraging rebellion is the genuine socio-economic change taking place in Baluchistan. Roads and electricity in some districts have triggered remarkable economic activity. Pishin is a good example of an economically active district. Orchards, Suzukis plying fruit and new constructions indicate change and activity. Such tribesmen would rather make money than sit in the hills to sulk.

SQ: *The setting of the most severe ethnic strife in Pakistan is Sind. The seeds of violence were sown in post-partition days, worsened during Ayub's 'one unit' martial rule and renewed further during Zia's 'Islamic' rule. The only time that the momentum of Sindhi nationalism was slowed was during the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto days. What chances do you give Benazir of being able to contain Sindhi resentment?*

AA: Benazir stands a greater chance of dealing with Sindhi nationalism than anyone in the last decade. Above all, she has become a symbol of Sind. Not only is she from the Sind, but she is young with fresh ideas, and has the mandate of the people of Sind. The rural areas of Sind almost unanimously voted for her and are with her. However the problems of the Sind are far more complex than emotional responses to one national leader like Benazir. First, there is the delicate demographic balance between the rural Sindhi ('the sons of the soil'), and the immigrants (the 'Mohajirs'). This population would not have posed as great a problem if it had been overwhelmingly of one or the other group. But because there is a 5-10 per cent difference between the two it poses a problem. Secondly, the Sindhis have a very proud literary and historical tradition. They produced great literature, great saints and scholars. This rich cultural tradition makes them more acutely aware of their sense of loss, of the fact that they may have fallen onto bad times in their own province. Thirdly, is the fact that Sind is probably the most educated and literate out of all the provinces of Pakistan. The final cruel paradox is that there is an awareness amongst Sindhi intellectuals and writers that Sind was in the forefront of the Pakistan movement, the need to assert a larger Muslim identity in India beginning well before the creation of Pakistan, and that it is today accused of being anti-Pakistan or wanting secession from Pakistan. This link between a rich literary and historical tradition, an educated population, an awareness of deprivation in their own province, and a very genuine feeling that the Sind was one of the foremost areas in India in the Pakistan movement makes a potent political mixture.

SQ: *Within Sind of course lies Karachi, and as we know Karachi is in*

severe crisis. Every week there are ethnic wars being fought on the streets of Karachi. What do you see as the future for this 'Pakistani Beirut'?

AA: Karachi presents a gloomy picture. In Karachi we have a city which has exploded into a population of about ten million, a city which cannot cope—water shortages and electricity and transport breakdowns—a city above all that in a sense doesn't belong to anyone. For the Sindhis it is a city which is outside their cultural pale, the Mohajir do not have deep roots in it, the Pathan labourer or the Punjabi do not really belong to it—the Pathan still looks to the Frontier Province, the Punjabis to the Punjab.

However, people have been settled in Karachi now for one or even two generations. Unless an awareness of a sense of identity—in all these groups—grows in Karachi I see little hope for the city. I think the situation will continue to deteriorate, although I will resist parallels with Beirut or Lebanon for that is in a very different political and cultural context. Karachi is more like other South Asian cities such as Calcutta and Bombay, falling apart under the pressures of population. Karachi will continue to deteriorate unless some very drastic thinking takes place in the Karachi administration. Unfortunately, most of the responses of administration have been in terms of law and order. An ethnic crisis leads to the removal of a deputy inspector general of police or deputy commissioner. The roots of the problem are untouched.

Problems are much more fundamental and deep rooted. We have to talk in terms of creating a civic sense. A civic sense has to grow, an awareness among people, education programmes, a feeling of roots, that this city belongs, that the people living in it are there to stay, like people living in London or New York. This sense of permanence would prepare people to invest in the city rather than just create an industrial unit or a mill to make money out of. Investment is needed in terms of schools, parks, roads, community places, above all, people.

Take the emergence in Karachi of the MQM movement. This is an interesting comment on Karachi as it brings in religion, class and literacy. The Mohajir position on religion has moved from an association with the Jamaat Islami and the Islamic parties of the 1960s to a completely secular alliance of the Urdu speakers. A shift has also taken place in class—the leadership was based at one stage in wealthy suburbs like Defence and Clifton, now it is in less privileged areas like Orangi, with the lower middle class leading the Mohajir movement. Also a very literate, young leadership has emerged in the MQM. Major changes have taken place in this predominant community of Karachi, the most funda-

mental being in the way they perceive themselves and the world. They recognise that they are caught in a whirlpool leading to the probable disintegration of Karachi. An awareness has grown that something drastic has to be done soon to arrest this crisis before it is too late.

SQ: *Is money the crisis of Karachi? And will economic prosperity be the only solution to Karachi's ethnic misery? And what general economic trends are there in Pakistan that are healing divisions?*

AA: I think the argument that economic prosperity automatically heals or closes ethnic wounds is a false one. Even economists are beginning to realise that income per capita and growth do not necessarily lead to harmony and the withering away of ethnic or political tensions. In fact, Karachi is considered in economic and statistical terms to be best-off in Pakistan. People outside Karachi constantly discuss how Karachi has siphoned off a large part of the wealth of Pakistan. The question is whether this wealth has created a harmonious society, and the answer is obviously in the negative. So simple economic growth is not enough—what is needed is tolerance and understanding between the groups, a need for the genuine acceptance of genuine rights, and cultural and social awareness of others.

Instead, what I see happening is a north and south divide in Pakistan society. Ethnic tensions have created a distinct and potentially dangerous cleavage. The north stretches from Peshawar via Rawalpindi to Lahore. It is the dominant, aggressive and dynamic part of Pakistan, providing the civil and military leadership of the country. Small farmers and active entrepreneurs drive its economy and shape its society. Islam, patriotism, the army, simple village life and its values (equated to Islam) are its important features. Its main cities boast magnificent fountains and parks; its citizens enjoy stimulating theatre. This is a vibrant, vital, confident society.

The south starts from Multan and includes Sind and Baluchistan. One sees evidence of progress and pockets of prosperity here (the farms of Rahimyar Khan or in Sind, Sukkur). But these are negated by the deep and widespread feelings of deprivation. The election results in November 1988 expressed this resentment unequivocally. The Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) swept the rural and the MQM the urban areas. It was the south rejecting the north. Unless bridged, the gap could assume the form of secessionist movements creating political problems for Pakistan.

SQ: *Having identified ethnicity as one of the chief culprits in creating political tensions, and having addressed yourself to the various ways of*

achieving social harmony, how do you see the resolution of Pakistan's ethnic quagmire in the 1990s? What will prevent the implosion of Pakistani society?

AA: Let me first say that although we have analysed ethnicity largely as a negative factor I do not see it as such. I think if you are to recognise that ethnicity creates a sense of awareness and pride of people in their own customs and traditions, a sense of achievement, of betterment of life, I think it is a very positive and healthy factor of social life. It gives identity, security and stability in a changing world. In Pakistan, unfortunately ethnicity is identified as a negative factor, for reasons we are discussing. Those planning for and leading Pakistani society must accept the fact that there is an ethnic problem, and that they cannot avoid tackling it any longer. This must be followed by dialogue involving intellectuals and the politicians. Most importantly, a series of steps have to be taken to tackle the problem: acceptance of the principle of pluralism and respect for regional language and culture; maintenance of the rule of law, in particular to protect minorities and their rights; encouragement of an open debate on ethnic issues—government must not hide from such issues, which unfortunately has been the policy so far. Without this debate, without open and honest information, the first important step to understanding each other cannot be taken. As government monopolises the media it must be committed to this policy. Ethnic groups, especially those with the greatest sense of deprivation, must in turn publicly renounce threats of secession, because these threats are simply counter-productive and lead to further repression. This announcement will clear the air and remove the ambiguity surrounding ethnicity. Neighbouring nations with an active interest in ethnic groups, especially trans-border peoples, must stop aiding secessionist groups. Without external training, weapons, and above all moral support, such ethnic movements will be severely discouraged. Finally, there have been definite developments in Pakistan society which, in spite of the general gloom, give cause for some optimism. There is a 'Pakistanisation' process at work. Though Urdu as a mother tongue is only spoken by 8 per cent of the population, it is now genuinely the lingua franca of Pakistan. I have been to the most remote parts of Baluchistan, possibly the most inaccessible province in Pakistan, where Urdu is now widely and commonly spoken along with the local language. Certain elite educational institutions or services like the civil service or the military have provided a platform and a network for the larger Pakistani identity to emerge. People from different parts of Pakistan are coming together and developing a kind of larger national

position in these institutions. Mobility is another shared experience; for instance the Pathan or Baluchi labourer in Karachi, or the Sindhi student in Lahore. Hence Pakistanis end up living and experiencing first hand the customs and attitudes of other groups in Pakistan. Another factor is the genuine breakdown of classes and the older structures in Pakistan society, which has released a dynamism in Pakistan society, a genuine sense of participation in decision-making, a sense of opportunity particularly through elections. Another positive phenomenon has been the emergence of a sharp and at times an excellent press--some of the newspapers writing in Karachi and Lahore are excellent by any standards and do not shirk from issues or hide from facts, and have contributed greatly to awareness of national identity, of Pakistanisation. Another significant factor is the recent emergence of professional women in Pakistan society. Now this may seem a paradox in an erstwhile orthodox society, but Benazir Bhutto symbolises this process. The emergence of women is another very strong plus for Pakistan society. Along with the minuses that we have identified—the long bouts of martial law, the appalling educational statistics, the breakdown of law and order, the clash of cultures, the widespread use of drugs—there are also positive signs that Pakistan society is vibrant and dynamic.

Afghanistan: back to tribalism or on to Lebanon?

As long as the *Mujahedin* were fighting Soviet troops, the Afghan war was considered a *jihad*, a holy war against invaders and infidels. An East-West dimension was added when the Reagan administration decided to apply the 'roll-back' policy to Afghanistan, even if the *Mujahedin* did not wait for US support to start their struggle against the communists and the USSR. Now that the Soviet troops have withdrawn, the domestic and regional factors are slowly prevailing upon the East-West ideological dimension. But the current fighting in Afghanistan does not demonstrate a mere return to the traditional pre-war tribal rivalries. The ideological dimension, although it has diminished, has not disappeared: it will remain as long as Najibullah is in charge in Kabul. The *Mujahedin* still advocate an Islamic state and oppose the Kabul regime on such vital issues as education, the status of women and foreign policy. The war politicised traditional society: there are now political parties inside Afghanistan, even if they express, to a certain extent, traditional segmentation. It also brought in a new leadership, which is altering the secular tribal structures. Finally, ethnic identities were reshaped by the war. Whatever happens, the future Afghanistan will differ from the old.

However, the traditional segmentation of society has not disappeared and is now expressed through the new political structures. Local, tribal and ethnic identities still play a role among both *Mujahedin* commanders and refugees, as well as in the political parties, including the *Mujahedin* groups and the Kabul Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

The segmentation of traditional Afghan society

It is true that, behind their ideological and political commitment, most Afghans remain loyal to their grassroots identity groups. Any leader is suspected of promoting the interests of his own group, even if he is the most committed political worker. These horizontal connections have always been at work, even during the worst period of revolution and war.¹ This traditional segmentation also entails a specific pattern of

exercising leadership. A traditional leader is someone who has been able to establish a personal patron-client relationship, at the expense of a real political party structure. He is not a feudal lord, but uses his influence to protect and promote the interests of his own segmentary group, thus enhancing his own status in terms of wealth and prestige. These *khan* and *malek* (as they are called) act as middlemen between state and local groups, taking some financial and symbolic advantages from both, in exchange for maintaining peace and preserving the group from encroachment by the state. These traditional patterns of local power have been pronounced on both sides during the war.² All these practices were previously explained in terms of tribalism or segmentation.³

But in order to understand how this segmentation could shape or influence the political landscape of post-war Afghanistan, we need to analyse it in greater depth. In fact, one has to distinguish three levels of communal identity in order to understand segmentation in Afghanistan: *qawm* (translated here as 'solidarity group'), tribe and ethnic group. *Qawm* is not used with a very precise signification by the Afghans: it could refer to any identity group from extended family to tribe or even ethnic group. But, because *qawm* affiliation, and not tribalism, is considered to be the lowest common denominator of group affiliations in Afghanistan, I shall use it to designate the basic solidarity group. Everybody, at least in the countryside, belongs to a *qawm*, but not necessarily to a tribe—tribes are to be found only in the south. Everyone has an ethnic identity, but ethnicity does not have the same meaning for the different groups.

A *qawm* is the term used to describe any segment of society bound by solidarity ties, whether it be an extended family, clan, occupational group or village. *Qawm* is based on kinship and patron-client relationships; before being an ethnic or tribal group, it is a solidarity group, which protects its members from the encroachments of the state and other *qawm*, but which is also the scene of internal competition between contenders for local supremacy.⁴ It is the basic unit of political involvement in the countryside, whatever the ethnic affiliation. *Qawm* affiliations are rather loose, and not necessarily based on a specific territory: there could be more than one *qawm* in a particular village or valley, and *qawm* affiliation does not entail a strong and tight social structure as tribalism does.

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according to a supposed common genealogy. For example, Ismat Muslim, a famous tribal leader who joined the regime in 1984, is first referred to his extended family, then to his clan (in his case 'Kakozai'), then the tribe ('Atshekzai'), then the tribal confederation ('Durrani'), then the ethnic group (Pashtun). At every level, there is a sense of solidarity against outsiders, but also rivalry with symmetrical groups—a fact which plays a major role in local politics. There is generally an acknowledged, even if provisional, leader for each extended family or clan, whose position does not depend merely on wealth, genealogy and power, but has to be continually enhanced and legitimised through active patronage. But at the tribal level, not to mention the ethnic level, there is never a permanent leadership (except among the Baluchi tribes). Big families, now challenged by military *Mujahedin* commanders and mullahs, are constantly competing for tribal leadership that is never attained.

Tribalism also involves tribal ideology, customs and common law. All these elements are embodied in what the Pashtuns call *pashtunwâli*: a set of values (honour, hospitality, shame and revenge), an institutional framework (*jirgah* or the assembly of tribesmen, which is supposed to take important decisions by consensus, under the guidance of the *khan* and *malek* (or 'elders'), and a common law which could sensibly differ from *shariat* as far as revenge, marriage, inheritance and landowning are concerned. This tribal system is widespread in southern and eastern Afghanistan, but is already disappearing among urban and displaced Pashtuns, who tend to retain only *qawm* and ethnic affiliation, with less emphasis on tribal organisation and customs.

Tajiks, Hazaras (Shias from central Afghanistan) and Uzbeks no longer follow the patterns of these tribal institutions and customs, which, outside the Pashtun areas, can be found only among Nuristanis and Baluchis, and, to a certain extent, among the Sunni Persian-speaking Aymaq groups.

One has to be cautious about using the usual ethnic maps and denominations when discussing ethnicity. In fact the signification given to an ethnic denomination by those defined by it differs from group to group. Groups such as the Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazaras, Aymaqs, Uzbeks, Baluchis, Taymanis, Pashais and Nuristanis do not designate symmetrical entities. A Pashtun is not only a Pashtu speaker but someone with a tribal identity. 'Tajik' has a more restricted meaning than 'Sunni Persian speakers', because not all Persian speakers refer to themselves as Tajik. 'Hazara' bears more of a religious signification (to be a Shia) than an

ethnic one. It was quite impossible, before the war, to define the ethnic groups as homogenous and symmetrical entities which could be conceived in political terms.

The effects of the war

The war brought considerable social changes. Afghanistan, which used to be an overwhelmingly rural society, has undergone a process of urbanisation through internal migrations towards the big cities (mainly Kabul and Mazar-i Sharif) and *hijrat* (emigration) from the country. Not only do many Afghan refugees live in cities (Peshawar and Quetta in Pakistan, Mashhad and Tehran in Iran), but life in refugee camps is shaped on urban rather than rural patterns. Afghanistan has suffered the largest exodus in the world since World War II. Revolution and war had a dramatic effect on the social balance as well. A new educated middle class has largely replaced the traditional elites in Kabul, under PDPA rule, but also among the *Mujahedin* leaders and in the refugee camps.

The war also brought a new leadership. The major tribal leaders usually left the country or, more rarely, joined the regime, which implemented an active tribal policy, shaped on the traditional relationship between central state and local powers. The new leadership of the *Mujahedin* is made up of either young, middle-class, educated Islamists (that is, Islamic militants) or traditional *ulema*, usually also young.⁵

The young Islamist intellectuals do not have legitimacy according to traditional patterns (which require them to be the offspring of influential families). They had to root themselves in traditional society by using, on one hand, new political patterns such as affiliation to a political party, implementation of *shariat* and military efficiency, and by adopting, on the other hand, some traditional patterns of power such as distributing weapons as a tool of influence, forging personal ties with other leaders and establishing a patron-client relationship with their followers. Leadership among non-tribal Persian speakers, both Shi'as and Sunnis, now consists mainly of young intellectuals and *ulemas*. In the south, among tribal Pashtuns, the young intellectuals had more difficulty making a breakthrough. There, the new leadership is now made up of *ulema* and mullahs, who were able to supersede the tribal divisions, using both the *shariat* and the Sufi *naqshbandi* networks. The come-back or breakthrough of the *ulema* in the tribal areas entailed a significant change in tribal structures, although tribal identities remain

as pervasive as ever. Mullahs were usually kept out of the tribal institutions such as the *jirgah*. Now that they are in charge, they are tending to discard the traditional *jirgah* (a Pashtu word) and to replace them with *shura* (an Arabic word meaning 'councils' made up of new leaders). The change is not merely semantic. Mullahs are pushing for adoption of *shariat* as opposed to *pashtunwali*. They have joined either the fundamentalist parties (the two Hizb-e Islami and the Jamiat) or the moderate, but clerical Harakat-e enqelab-e Islami.

These changes have, of course, altered the traditional patterns of power, though not completely: the *Mujahedin* have never been able to replace a traditional structure with a modern political one. The only party that tried to do so, the Hizb-e Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has not received broad-based support in any of the twenty-seven provinces, but has been confined to small pockets, mainly made of local ethnic minority groups. Traditional society has not been destroyed in Afghanistan, but is expressed through the new political parties. Most of the *Mujahedin* commanders either use traditional patterns of power and thus become the new *khân* and *malek*, or try to adapt traditional society to more modern political structures. Compromise between ideological commitment and traditional society is the rule. Contrary to what has often been said, the main reason for affiliation to a political party is not merely to obtain weapons. If this were true, political affiliations would have altered throughout the war according to the influx of weapons, and the best-armed party would have finally gained supremacy. This is not the case: three out of four *Mujahedin* commanders have remained loyal to their initial political party. Heavily equipped extremist fundamentalist groups, under leaders like Hekmatyar and Sayyaf, were unable to achieve a significant breakthrough in terms of influence.

The ambivalence of the process of politicisation in Afghanistan is obvious. It gives a new look to traditional segmentation, but it also introduces political references (to a specific ideology, for instance, which is very alien to traditional society) and new structures. Field commanders have created a local administration (distinct from the Peshawar bureaucracy) using prerogatives of the former central state: there are committees dealing with finance, health, culture and so on, which collect taxes and might establish their own judicial power. But these new state structures do not have a head. The *Mujahedin* reinvented administration and bureaucracy but not the state.

On the other hand, it is not rare to see *Mujahedin* field commanders.

mainly the petty ones, behaving like former notables and using the political fragmentation in order to express and enhance the traditional *qawm* segmentation. They tend to play the new political game by the old rules. The party is like the central state which is used to enhance a local status (rather than to achieve a nation-wide, ideologically-based project). Thus the traditional power status in Afghanistan is an incentive to both political affiliation and political segmentation. Subordination of local notables and commanders to an *amir* (both a political and military leader) is possible only if the leader is a charismatic and/or religious figure, or if the level of politicisation is so high that discipline exists.

The rooting of modern political party structures in Afghanistan could either bypass the traditional segmentation (as in the north-east) or, on the contrary (as in the centre-north), give a new boost to infra-political, infra-ethnic, and even infra-tribal segmentation, at the *qawm* level: a local petty notable, followed by a few dozen parents and tenants, could suddenly regain power by joining a party which is a rival of the dominant party and which provides him with enough weapons and money to rise above the new law and to act as an independent actor. These local notables would not have expressed themselves politically before the war, but they now find access to weapons and a new means of self-assertion in political affiliation, making it more difficult for the dominant party and leader to assert themselves as a political alternative to the traditional segmentation. Such petty notables do not necessarily have a territorial basis (so they are neither feudal nor war-lords), but their simple presence as an independent network is enough to thwart the implementation of a would-be state structure.

The changing ethnic balance

The war created a new ethnic balance. Traditionally, between 1747 and 1978, the Pashtun Durrani tribal confederation held central power. By contrast, the bulk of the Communist Party was made up of Ghilzai and eastern Pashtuns, because of the dominant *khalq* faction. Thus the Communist coup in April 1978 was first seen as the revenge of the Ghilzai against the Durrani. But the majority of the seven Peshawar leaders are also either Ghilzai (Hekmatyar, Sayyaf, Nabi) or eastern Pashtun (Khaless). Of the three other leaders, two have family links with Ghilzai (Gailani and Mojaddidi); only Rabbani is a non-Pashtun. There is no pure-bred Durrani in the *Mujahedin* provisional government. Both the Kabul regime and the Peshawar-based Alliance are mainly Ghilzai. The

fight for Kabul is, therefore, not a tribal or an ethnic conflict: it still retains its ideological dimension.

But there is now a change in the ethnic balance in Afghanistan. There has been a bigger proportion of Pashtuns among the refugees. A significant number of the Pashtuns who established themselves in northern Afghanistan during the last hundred years (the *nâqel*) went back to southern Afghanistan or to Pakistan. Large-scale nomadism, which involved only Pashtun tribes, has almost disappeared. So the weight of the traditionally dominant Pashtuns has been reduced, but not their pretensions to rule Afghanistan, as one can see by the predominantly Pashtun nature of the Kabul and Peshawar elites. However, the opposition between Durrani on one hand, and Ghilzai and the eastern Pashtuns on the other, makes the emergence of an 'all Pashtun' party or coalition seem improbable.

But the war had the effect of strengthening the self-assertion of the other ethnic groups. The regime propaganda coined the word *melliât* (a translation for the Soviet concept of 'nationality') to give a political expression to the non-Pashtun groups: this policy did not succeed in rallying many people because the regime is still perceived as mainly Pashtun, but it encouraged renewed ethnic awareness among dominated ethnic groups. The Sunni Persian speakers did not previously use the word 'Tâjik' applied to them by both the Soviets and the Western ethnologists, but now they tend to define themselves as an ethnic group. The majority of them have been attracted by the Jamiat party, the only one headed by a non-Pashtun. This party also has some support among southern and western groups such as the Pashtuns, Aymaqs, Taimanis and Timouris, who were listed as separate ethnic groups by ethnologists but who behave no differently from the other Sunni Persian speakers in terms of political affiliation: they tend also to be seen as Tâjiks. The non-Pashtun groups had no tradition of handling weapons: the war provided them with opportunities to own and use weapons. Commanders like Masud are heroes for Tâjiks: military efficiency is no longer seen as a Pashtun prerogative.

Two ethnic groups, the Hazara Shia and the Uzbeks, which used to be dominated by the others before the war, gained a stake in the regional balance of power.

The war inspired ethnic reassertion among the formerly despised Shia Hazaras living in central Afghanistan. In 1979 they established a 'United Islamic Revolutionary Council' (*shura-ye ettefagh*), headed by traditional *sayyad* (notables), who controlled the whole Hazarajat, before

being toppled by a coalition of pro-Khomeinist parties. Now Hazarajat is controlled by a coalition of eight parties, based in Iran. Shia particularism has been reinforced by identification with the Iranian Islamic revolution. Iran, in Afghanistan as in Lebanon, is using the Shia minority as a tool for political and diplomatic influence. In February 1989, the *shura*, or council of the *Mujahedin* which was gathered in Islamabad, Pakistan, to elect a provisional *Mujahedin* government, rejected the Shia claim to hold 20 per cent of the seats: this represented more than just disagreement on population percentages, but reveals the strongly anti-Shia bias that is to be found among Pashtuns, and which is fuelled by the growing Wahhabi influence among the Peshawar-based Alliance.

The Sunni Uzbeks tended to be more receptive towards Soviet propaganda than the other ethnic groups: the direct links established through the Soviet border with the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan might also have stressed their ethnic particularism. The USSR might use the Uzbeks to retain some influence in the north of Afghanistan.

Strangely enough, the Turkmens, closer to the Soviet border, remained fiercely anti-Soviet, perhaps because they had fled from the USSR in the 1920s. Other ethnic groups such as the Baluchis, Nuristanis and Pashais did not seem to develop a particular ethnic awareness during the war.

Of course, there are some constant patterns linking the ethnic map to the political map.⁶ However, although ethnic affiliations might play a bigger role in Afghanistan in future, they will not necessarily express themselves through the political divisions of the Peshawar parties, because there is no 'single ethnic issue' party: although both *hizb* Hekmatyar and *hizb* Khales are mainly Pashtun, they have Persian speaking military commanders; the mainly Persian-speaking Jamiat also has some prominent Pashtun commanders in Logar, Kabul and Kandahar provinces. In Kandahar, all the *Mujahedin* parties are represented. The *Harakat-e enqelab*, because of its clerical nature, is spread uniformly among all Afghan ethnic groups. This territorial intricacy within the political parties, added to the fact that they could express infra-tribal and infra-ethnic segmentation locally, complicates the political landscape of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's political future

Afghan politics are complicated by the intricacy of the factors mentioned above: *qawm*, tribal and ethnic affiliations combined with

ideological and political divisions and exacerbated by the influence of the three neighbouring countries (Pakistan, USSR and Iran), each playing both ideological and ethnic cards.

At the local level, the key issue remains the *qawm* affiliation. The withdrawal of Soviet troops and, in most cases, local Kabul regime garrisons, has brought the game back to the old rules, except where the *Mujahedin* have begun to create new political structures at the provincial level. These new structures are to be found in three areas. In the north-east, under Masud, a political administration called *shura-ye nazar* (or 'supervisory council') has been established. Masud has also established the only professional 'army' of the Afghan resistance. In the west, Ismail Khan created an administration stretching over almost four provinces. Nevertheless, both are still meeting with local opposition mainly from local segmentary groups which express their autonomy by joining rival parties. In the south, provincial *shura* or councils are in charge in Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces, combining the traditional tribal democracy with a new clerical leadership. Other changes have also been made. In the Kunar province (which is now far from the battlefield), mullahs trained in Pakistan through Wahhabi-sponsored *madrassa* have established two local Islamic 'republics', under heavy Wahhabi influence—in Bashgal Valley (under Mullah Afzal) and in Pech Valley. But even in areas where these new structures have been established, the local commanders have to deal with the *qawm* segmentation.

Elsewhere, rivalries between *qawm*, tribe and ethnic groups have prevented the *Mujahedin* from profiting from the Soviet withdrawal, as shown by the Jalalabad battle in spring 1989. Such a situation will probably prevent any future central state from rooting itself in the countryside. The slow process, initiated from 1890 under the Amir Abdurrahman, which enabled the state to control the countryside, was made possible only by the progressive build-up of a strong government army; it is unlikely that any such central army will be established in the next decade.

Moreover, the traditional rules of the power game pervade the *Mujahedin* movement at every level, including the political parties. In fact, with only symbolic reference to Islam ('*amir*', '*shura*', 'ministers', 'committees'), almost all the Peshawar leaders are playing the traditional power game. They govern through a patron-client relationship and make appointments by means of nepotism and personal relations. So the nascent bureaucracy, built in Peshawar with US and Saudi support.

does not provide a credible alternative, because it has nothing in common with a real state structure except that it is a bureaucracy.

If *qawm* segmentation is prevalent at the local level or in the political parties, the main reason for division at the national level is ethnic segmentation. In fact, four ethnic groups are now contending for a share in central power, because they were able to assert themselves as ethnic groups during the course of the war: the Tâjiks (Sunni Persian-speakers), the Shias (mainly of the Hazara ethnic group), the Durrani Pashtun confederation and the Ghilzai and eastern Pashtun tribes. Others, who did not assert themselves politically throughout the war, will have to form alliances with these groups.

The Ghilzai and eastern Pashtuns are dominant both in the PDPA and among the Peshawar-based Alliance. They received the largest share of the weaponry. The Durrani are split between monarchist tribal leaders and the more fundamentalist fighting mullahs, but retain strong horizontal links: among them (unlike the eastern Pashtuns), tribalism unites more than it divides. Their spokesman is generally Pir Sayyad Gailani, a convinced monarchist. The Tâjiks have the most famous military leaders, like Masud and Ismail (who is nevertheless of Pashtun origin), but a very small share of the political power in the Peshawar-based Alliance. Although there are Tâjiks in all the parties, they have mainly joined the Jamiat headed by Borhanuddin Rabbani. The Shias joined the Iran-based Alliance of the 'Eight Parties'.

Until the dismissal in May 1989 of General Hamid Gul, the head of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence in charge of dealing with the Afghan *Mujahedin*, the Pakistani strategy was to favour the Ghilzais and eastern Pashtuns, in order to control the tribal belt on the Afghan side of the border and to establish a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul, centred around fundamentalist Ghilzais. The *Mujahedin shura* (assembly) that was convened in Islamabad in February 1989, under the auspices of Pakistan, saw the increasing hegemony of the Ghilzais and eastern Pashtuns. The Shia delegation was rebuffed. Rabbani, as head of the Jamiat, probably the biggest and certainly the most efficient of the *Mujahedin* parties, has been given a symbolic appointment as Minister of Reconstruction. The key positions of Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Minister of Foreign Affairs were all given to Ghilzais. The ill-fated decision to attack Jalalabad in March 1989, in order to install a provisional government in this provincial capital, was taken to favour the Ghilzais and the eastern Pashtuns. Kandahar, a

more logical choice from a military point of view, is in a Durrani area. This pro-Ghilzai policy antagonised all the other groups. Given these facts, what are the possible alternatives? Any future power in Afghanistan will depend on the relations between these four groups: Durrani, Ghilzais, Tâjiks and Shias.

If the Peshawar-based Alliance remains united, which is unlikely, the Shias, Tâjiks and Durrani will resent any government established through it. If these three ethnic groups were able to make an agreement between themselves, they could overturn the Kabul regime and establish a true multi-ethnic government, but the tribal belt, dominated by eastern Pashtuns and Ghilzais, will remain unruly for years. The former king, Zâher Shah, might play a role in such a coalition.

If Durrani and Ghilzais join together, they will try to reinstall a predominantly Pashtun regime. But this time the Tâjiks and the Shias will not accept exclusion from central power and a civil war might erupt, with northern and southern regions in opposition. Tehran might support the 'Persian' northern front, while the USSR could entice the Uzbeks into making a direct deal with them.

If none of these groups are able to ally with each other, 'lebanonisation' will be the most probable outcome, with each ethnic group trying to find foreign support. One of the major threats for the future is the growing anti-Shia bias among Pashtuns. Pashtuns could make some concessions to the Tâjiks, who are Sunni like themselves, but they resent the new self-assertion of the Hazaras. Similarly, the Hazaras will never accept being reduced to their former inferior status: today, they have weapons and Iranian support.

Could the Kabul regime take advantage of these clashes in order to remain in charge, or at least to establish a coalition government in which it will retain a large share of power? Trying to achieve this aim, the regime followed a double-track policy: first to remove the ideological dimension of the war, then to play the ethnic rivalries unravelled by the fading away of *jihad* spirit. The decision to return to more traditional patterns of power and to abandon revolutionary rhetoric was taken in December 1986, when the policy of 'national reconciliation' was launched. The word 'democratic' was dropped from the official title of the 'Republic of Afghanistan'. It was claimed that the party had never been communist. Islam was recognised as the official state religion and tribalism as a legitimate political pattern. Could this policy be sufficient to entice large sections of the population to join the regime? As long as Najibullah remains head of state, it seems that the

ideological associations with communism will not fade away—but Najibullah could be removed at any time.

The regime has been helped in its endeavour to break the *Mujahedin* front by external elements. The withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the country and the return of most of the regime garrisons from the countryside in order to defend the capital created a sudden political vacuum that was not filled by the *Mujahedin* provisional government. Old local feuds have resurfaced amongst the *Mujahedin*, at a time when regime members are playing down their own tribal and ethnic rivalries.

The mistakes made both by the over-confident *Mujahedin* and the Pakistani military gave an unexpected breathing space to the Kabul regime. The Shias were rebuked by the Peshawar-based Alliance in February 1989, thus opening the road for rapprochement between Moscow and Tehran, where Shevarnadze was received by Imam Khomeini. The powerful *Mujahedin* field commanders were left out of the plans for attacking Jalalabad. The resentment of the non-Ghilzai ethnic groups and of the *Mujahedin* field commanders could entail a political reshuffle in Afghanistan if Najibullah leaves power.

It is also obvious that the provisional *Mujahedin* government established in February 1989 is not a credible political alternative. The besieged PDPA regime (at least in its present form) will be toppled sooner or later, though not by a purely military offensive. The future of Afghanistan is in the hands of the powerful *Mujahedin* field commanders. In fact the failure of the Jalalabad offensive should not hide the fact that the military situation of the field-commanders has improved: they used the Soviet withdrawal and the evacuation of hundreds of government troops holding local posts to enlarge their territories and to improve their communication lines. But at the time of writing this article (June 1989), the *Mujahedin* field commanders have not taken any political step. Important questions must be asked about the likely course of their political decisions. Will they retain their political affiliations with the Peshawar-based parties? Will they revert to their traditional ethnic affiliations, thus plunging Afghanistan into an ethnic civil war? It is more likely that they will try to establish a new political structure (even at the cost of some political reshuffling) in order to establish a loose multi-ethnic central government in Afghanistan. However, it is uncertain that neighbouring countries would accept such an 'Afghani' compromise: would they prefer to trigger a 'lebanonisation' of Afghanistan? At present there are no obvious answers. What is clear is that these are the questions that will arise in the coming months of the Afghan conflict.

Notes

- ¹ The fact that Hafizullah Amin, who was the strong man of the PDPA regime from August 1977 to December 1979 and was known as a ruthless dictator, spared the life of Rassul Abdurra Sayyaf, one of the future leaders of the Peshawar-based Alliance, when Sayyaf was jailed in Kabul, has something to do with the fact that both are from the same tribe, the Ghilzai Kharruti.
- ² According to the former general secretary of the PDPA, Babrak Karmal, in a speech recorded by the official daily newspaper *Haqiqat-i Enqelab-i Sawr*, 21 December 1985, the party life is rife with 'factionalism, tribalism, corruption and regionalism'. It took some time for the USSR to understand that factionalism in the PDPA was based mainly on tribalism and not on ideological oppositions.
- ³ The only tribal leaders who used to identify themselves with the state are the Pashtun Durrani tribal aristocracy, who founded the Afghan state in the eighteenth century. The 1978 coup deprived this aristocracy of all its power. Most of the Durrani tribal leaders are now living in exile. Among the Durrani tribes fighting against the regime a new local leadership has emerged which is not very different from the leadership of other groups.
- ⁴ For the definition of a *qawm* see P Centlivres, *Un Bazar d'Asie Centrale*, Reichert: Wiesbaden pp 158-9, W Azoy, *Buckashl, Game and Power in Afghanistan*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, pp 31-2. O Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, chapter 1.
- ⁵ For an analysis of the new *Mujahedin* leadership, see O Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, chapters 4 and 10.
- ⁶ O Roy, *ibid*, chapter 7. The Pashtun 'fundamentalist' groups are not so well rooted among Durrani tribal areas, but quite well among the eastern Pashtuns, mainly through Hizb-e Islam Khales (Zadran and Khugiani tribes; but Hekmatyar has good implantation among Shinwari) Hizb-e Islami Hekmatyar won the majority of the Pashtu-speaking pockets in the north-east from Ghilzai origin (in Bughlan, Takhar, Kunduz), where tribalism has disappeared as a social order (but not from the memory of the former tribesmen, who still retain the name of their tribe, but have given up tribal institutions such as *jirgah*). Jamiat has the upper hand among Persian speakers. Two factors are here important: sociological (tribal/non-tribal) and ethnic (Pashtun/non-Pashtun). Gailani and Mojaddidi are stronger among Pashtun tribesmen in the south.

The Kurdish mosaic of discord

This article aims to analyse Kurdish collective movements and to examine the impact of Kurdish ethno-nationalism on the politics of Turkey, Iran and Iraq today. The Kurds, an ethnic minority numbering some 19 million people, are primarily concentrated in these three countries, with residual communities found in Syria and the USSR. Modern-day Kurds trace their origins to the Medes, a tribe that descended from Central Asia into the Iranian plateau at the end of the second millenium and ruled the area from 614 BC to 550 BC as one of the principal pre-Islamic dynasties.¹ After the Arab conquest in the middle of the seventh century, the name 'Kurd' was used to refer to the people inhabiting the Zagros mountain ranges of northwestern Iran.

Although the Kurds have never ruled for a sustained period over Kurdistan (land of the Kurds), Kurdish personalities have had a significant impact on the contours of Middle Eastern politics for centuries. Perhaps the most notable Kurdish leader was the legendary Salah-ed Din Ayubbi (Saladin) who led the Islamic forces against the Crusaders. Saladin, however, did not emphasise his Kurdish ethnicity and considered himself to be a Muslim leader and warrior, not a Kurdish nationalist.

With the advent of the Safavid dynasty in Iran in 1501 and the intensification of Ottoman Persian rivalry, the Kurdish-inhabited buffer zone between these two competing empires gained strategic prominence in regional politics, and the Kurds were wooed by the Persians and the Ottoman Turks. This allowed the Kurdish tribal chiefs to become more assertive politically, and some of them succeeded in establishing semi-independent principalities in the region, a few of which survived into the first half of the nineteenth century.²

Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the delegates of the Allied Powers and the defeated Ottoman Sultan signed the Treaty of Sèvres, which promised the Kurds an independent homeland of their own. However, due to the emergence of Mustafa Kemal as an important stabilising factor in the new Turkey and the rise of British economic interests in Iraq, the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres were never implemented with regard to the creation of a sovereign Kurdish nation-state.³

The most serious and most successful Kurdish attempt to establish an independent Kurdistan occurred in 1945, when the autonomous Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was established in northwestern Iran with the active support of Soviet forces (which had occupied the north as part of the Allied occupation forces of neutral Iran during World War II). The Mahabad Republic was short-lived; it disintegrated when the Iranian army retook the city of Mahabad in December 1946, following the Soviet withdrawal from Iran. The leadership of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, including President Qazi Mohammad and a large number of Kurdish functionaries, were executed.⁴

As the history of Kurdish ethno-nationalism clearly demonstrates, the politicisation of ethnicity is basically a recent phenomenon. As Gerard Chaliand has noted, political ethnicity has developed since the creation of the political and geographic boundaries of the modern nation-state system, which for most of the Middle East took place in the twentieth century.⁵ The Middle East is a kaleidoscope of competing ethnic groups, whose claims for a particular territory or demand for an equitable share in the power structure of a sovereign nation-state's government have politicised the notion of ethnicity, and have transformed it from a purely 'personal quest for meaning and belonging into a group demand for respect and power'.⁶ The politicisation of ethnicity implies, *inter alia*, that the political integration of states and the process of nation building would be retarded. In other words, competing, and sometimes incompatible claims of ethnic groups within the boundaries of existing nation-states have created a mosaic of discord.

Kurdish ethnicity

Ethnic stratification in multi-ethnic societies follows a variety of organisational patterns. The pattern that most closely fits the condition of the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq is characterised by a dominant core (not necessarily a majority) and an aggregation of peripheral but large ethnic groups. In this model, the core 'views itself as the historic, institutional and symbolic creator, and hence appropriate hegemon of the state'.⁷ In Iran, for example, the dominant core consists of the Persians of the central Iranian plateau, with groups such as the Kurds, Baluchis and Turkomen constituting the periphery. Likewise, the dominant Sunni Arabs in Iraq and Turks in Turkey make up the core *vis-à-vis* their Kurdish periphery.

The assimilation of peripheral ethnic groups into the mainstream of

society has been one of the most enduring obstacles to national integration and stable nation-state formation in the Middle East. In the case of the Kurds, attempts at their assimilation and integration have taken different forms. In Turkey, the Kurds are viewed simply as a subgroup of Turkish society rather than as a distinct ethnic category characterised by unity of culture. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, emphasis on the doctrine of Islamic unity has resulted in the rejection of the notion of linguistic, racial or geographic considerations in ethnic differentiation in the Muslim community, thereby rejecting the demands of some ethnic groups to be recognised as nations. In the words of Ayatollah Khomeini:

Sometimes, the word *minorities* is used to refer to people such as the Kurds. Lurs, Turks, Persians, Baluchis and such like. These people should not be called minorities because this term assumes that there is a difference between these brothers. In Islam such a difference has no place at all. There is no difference between Muslims who speak different languages, for instance the Arabs or the Persians. It is very probable that such problems have been created by those who do not wish the Muslim countries to be united.⁸

For Ayatollah Khomeini, the question of ethnicity or ethno-nationalism among the Muslim *umma* (community) is a secondary issue, as Islam resolves ethnic conflict on the basis of Muslim unity. However, the rise of Islamic revivalism has coincided with a revival of ethnic consciousness throughout the Middle East, and Islam has not acted as a countervailing force against increasing Kurdish ethnic demands for self-determination in the region.⁹

In Iraq, the process of Kurdish integration has been hindered by the Iraqi government's glorification of Arabism and Arab nationalism, and by the policy of relocation of Kurds from their homeland to other parts of the country. The most recent manifestation of this enforced uprooting of Iraqi Kurds occurred in April 1989 when the residents of the Qalat Dizah and Raniya districts, located near the Zab River on the Iranian border, were ordered to leave their homes and prepare for relocation to other parts of Iraq. Until this time, both of these districts were among the few areas in Iraqi Kurdistan that had been spared from the forced evacuation of their inhabitants. Although the Iraqi government has been forced by Arab and Western pressure to postpone the planned evacuation of the Kurds from their homes in Qalat Dizah and Raniya, over 7,000 Kurds will be affected by the implementation of this policy.

Notwithstanding attempts to ameliorate or deny Kurdish ethnicity in the Middle East, the fact remains that the Kurds have persisted in their identification with a distinct ethnic nation 'sharing similar characteristics such as a distinct language, a religion, a culture, or a historical experience'.¹⁰ As I have argued elsewhere, the Kurds have maintained their distinctiveness because miscegenation has not significantly affected their racial stock. However, as Aryans they share similar traits with the Persians, but are distinct from both the Turks and Semitic Arabs.¹¹ In addition to their racial distinctiveness, a common religion can also serve as a binding force towards the development of a Kurdish ethnic identity. At least two-thirds of all Kurds belong to the Shafai school of Sunni Islam. In the Bakhtaran (Kermanshah) region of Iran, most Kurds are followers of Twelver Shia Islam, as are the overwhelming majority of other Iranians. The Sunni and Shia Kurds have not exhibited different socio-political traits from each other, and generally speaking, the importance of religion should not be overemphasised in the development of Kurdish ethno-nationalism. However, the Shia Kurds did not share the enthusiasm of their Sunni brethren for autonomy after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and generally tended to support Ayatollah Khomeini as their spiritual and political leader.

With respect to the issue of language both as a vehicle of communication and a binding symbol of ethnic identity, the Kurds have failed to adopt a standard language or a Kurdish *lingua franca*. Although all existing Kurdish languages and dialects belong to the northwestern Iranian branch of Indo-European languages, each is, for the most part, unintelligible to the speakers of the other Kurdish languages. There are three major reasons for the heterogeneity of Kurdish languages.¹² First, the rugged, mountainous terrain of Kurdistan has historically impeded communication between Kurdish tribes and clans. Second, the absence of a strong, centralised administrative structure to unify the many rival Kurdish groups encouraged the development of diverse languages among the Kurds. Finally, the emergence in the twentieth century of a sovereign nation-state system in the Middle East further fragmented the Kurds and placed them under the jurisdiction of countries which themselves displayed linguistic diversity.

The rise of a European-style nation-state system in the Middle East emphasised the development of a common language as an important vehicle for modernisation and nation-building in the multi-ethnic and multilingual societies of the region. Consequently, Kurdish languages became victimised by a 'series of state-sponsored policies designed to

diminish, and in one case [Turkey], simply annihilate them altogether'.¹³ In fact, Article 26 of the 1982 Turkish Constitution makes it a criminal offence to use the Kurdish language in Turkey, as it prohibits the use of all banned languages, such as Kurdish, in any form. Article 89 states that 'no political party may concern itself with the defence, development, or diffusion of any non-Turkish language or culture; nor may they seek to create minorities within our frontiers or to destroy our national unity'.¹⁴

In Baathi Iraq, the government has given a modicum of recognition to the Kurdish language. For example, the government's March 1970 directive, known as the March Manifesto, recognised Kurdish as an official language in areas where a Kurdish majority was in existence.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Kurdish language has received some attention in educational curricula and publications in Iraq. Similarly, Iran has also granted recognition to Kurdish language and culture. Both printed and electronic dissemination of Kurdish have been allowed in Iran, and since the revolution of 1978-79, the Iranian Kurds have been granted the legal right to receive instruction in Kurdish at the elementary school level. Although both Iraq and Iran have, within limits, tolerated the utilisation of Kurdish, the effective development of a Kurdish *lingua franca* has been thwarted by periodic government suppression of Kurdish culture and discouragement of multilingual channels of communication in each country.

The notion of a common cultural means of expression and way of life has, more than any other single factor, kept the flames of Kurdish nationalism alive and made the assimilation of the Kurds into society at large more difficult. In other words, such objective factors as race, language and religion have been less important in perpetuating Kurdish ethno-nationalism than the subjective element of 'Kurdishness', based on a common way of life and a common historical experience.¹⁶ And for the Kurds, mountain dwelling has been the bond that has kept them distinct from the rest of society. The Kurds have a saying that 'without the mountains, there will be no Kurds'. The mountain, for a Kurd, represents 'no less than the embodiment of the deity: mountain is his mother, his refuge, his protector, his home, his farm, his market, his mate—and his only friend . . . Whenever one hears the word Kurd, the word mountain soon follows—they seem part of a whole'.¹⁷ Indeed, even today it is common to refer to all mountain-dwelling people in the area as Kurds. And those Kurds who migrate to the plains and become city dwellers soon lose their Kurdish identity despite maintaining their

language. The Kurdish attachment to mountains explains why mass relocation of the Kurdish population has been the most effective method of retarding Kurdish ethno-nationalism.

Kurdish political organisations in the 1980s

Kurdish ethnic consciousness has given rise to Kurdish political movements in Iran, Iraq and Turkey, which differ in their strategy, tactics and ideological inclinations. For example, in Iran and Turkey, where the process of state formation began in the 1920s, the political structures of Kurdish tribes have become subordinated to the central authority of those countries. Consequently, the development of Kurdish national movements in Iran and Turkey has been influenced by a myriad of factors, including domestic forces for change that have entered the political landscape of twentieth-century Iran and Turkey. The left in both countries has been the most consistent supporter of the rights of ethnic minorities, and has interacted closely with the Kurdish nationalists. Consequently, today's Kurdish movements in Iran and Turkey have been more leftist-oriented and less attuned to other ideological persuasions.

In Iraq, on the other hand, state formation began in earnest in the 1950s. As a result, the basic form of Kurdish political and social organisation remained heavily influenced by the tribal structure and *aghas* (clan leaders in a Kurdish tribe) and sheikhs, or Kurdish religious leaders. This explains why tribalism still affects the divisions within the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq. For example, the Kurdish Democratic Party originated within the Barzani tribe and its leadership or power structure has always been dominated by the Barzani family, and the intra-Kurdish struggles in Iraq are reflective of tribal conflicts. What follows is an analysis of major Kurdish movements and parties in those countries today.

Iran

The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran

The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), the oldest and the largest of all Kurdish political organisations, traces its origin to the Committee of Kurdish Youth, which was founded in 1943. This movement transformed itself in 1945 into a political party and became known as the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, incorporating many prominent

Kurdish intellectuals and nationalists. The KDPI played a major role in the formation of the ill-fated Kurdish Democratic Republic of Mahabad in 1945. The failure of the Mahabad Republic forced the party to go underground. After the victory of the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the KDPI resurfaced under the leadership of Abdul Rahman Qassemlou, who had recently returned to Iranian Kurdistan after a lengthy period of exile in Europe.

Unlike the original KDPI whose ultimate goal was to establish an independent Kurdistan, the reconstituted KDPI insists on maintaining the territorial integrity of Iran while demanding autonomy for Kurdistan within an Iranian federal system. The slogan 'Democracy for Iran, Autonomy for Kurdistan' captures the essence of the KDPI's political objectives.¹⁸ It was within this framework that the KDPI in 1981 joined the National Council of Resistance (NCR), which included several nationalist and leftist opposition groups to the Islamic Republic. However, with the domination of the NCR by the *Mujahedin-e Khalq* Islamic leftist guerrilla group and the centralisation of decision-making power at the *Mujahedin's* hands, the KDPI withdrew from the NCR in the mid-1980s.

Notwithstanding its facade of unity, the KDPI has become a fractious organisation comprising three competing wings. The dominant wing of the KDPI is still led by Qassemlou and his associates. The other two factions have been associated with Kareem Hessami and Ghani Bloorian, both of whom have had close relations with Iran's pro-Soviet Tudeh Party. Unlike the Qassemlou faction, which has generally favoured armed struggle against Khomeini's regime, the Hessami and Bloorian factions of the KDPI initially adopted a conciliatory posture *vis-à-vis* the Islamic Republic. Their supportive stance towards the Iranian government mirrored the position taken by the Tudeh Party. However, with the suppression of the Tudeh Party in 1982 and the consequent arrest and execution of several Tudeh members by the Islamic Republic, the Hessami and Bloorian wings of the KDPI have adopted a policy of armed confrontation with the Tehran regime.¹⁹ Qassemlou, on the other hand, has on a few occasions held talks with the representatives of the Islamic Republic. However, Qassemlou's refusal to modify his demands for Kurdish autonomy and the Iranian government's adamant opposition to total socio-cultural autonomy for Kurdistan have perpetuated the long deadlock between the KDPI and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Qassemlou's dabbling with the Islamic Republic in search of 'moderate elements' within the ruling governing circle in Tehran has further divided the KDPI into hostile subfactions. The non-Tudeh left in the

KDPI has accused Qassemlou and the Kurdish bourgeoisie of betraying the Kurdish cause by favouring an open-door policy and national reconciliation with the Iranian bourgeoisie. The resulting schism led to the expulsion of fifteen prominent members of the KDPI's Executive Committee at the party's Eighth Congress in 1988. The left then coalesced around the expelled members of the KDPI and established a new movement, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran-Revolutionary Leadership, with a stridently Marxist orientation.²⁰

The Revolutionary Organisation of the Kurdish Toilers of Iran

The recent misfortunes of the Revolutionary Organisation of the KDPI have allowed the Kurdish Toilers of Iran (KOMALAH), a Marxist-Leninist movement, to emerge as the most dynamic organisation fighting for Kurdish autonomy in Iran. KOMALAH has received the moral support of Sheik Ezzedin Hussein, a charismatic and highly popular religious leader among the Kurds. Unlike the KDPI, KOMALAH sees the success of the Kurdish struggle in the emergence of a Marxist revolution throughout Iran.²¹ KOMALAH traces its origin to the Kurdish uprising of 1967-68 which was organised by such Kurdish communist activists as Abdullah Sharifzadeh, Sulayman and Abdullah Moeini. Although these activists were concerned about the plight of the Kurds, they were equally interested in promoting class consciousness and Marxist revolutionary thought and practice among all Iranian workers. As such, KOMALAH has from the outset viewed itself as an organisation that transcends ethnic boundaries.

After some fifteen years of operating within a loose structural arrangement, KOMALAH underwent major structural changes in September 1983, when it reorganised itself after the hierarchical communist parties elsewhere in the world and became the Kurdish wing of the newly-established Communist Party of Iran. Unlike other Kurdish movements which have sought to strengthen Kurdish ethnicity through psychological ties to Kurdish history, KOMALAH 'pays particular attention to political education; it teaches village boys and girls the principles of class and guerrilla warfare'.²²

Until the late 1970s, KOMALAH's ideological orientation within the Marxist-Leninist line was predominantly Maoist. At its first congress in 1979, however, KOMALAH renounced Maoism as inappropriate to Kurdish conditions.²³ Since then, its ideology can best be described as 'pure' Marxism of the Albanian type, and the organisation still considers the late Enver Hoxha of Albania as one of its most important international heroes.

Notwithstanding KOMALAH's great success in expanding its membership, it has not been able to exercise effective control over any area of Iranian Kurdistan since government forces retook all Kurdish lands from the rebels.²⁴ Moreover, the internecine fighting between the KDPI and KOMALAH *peshmergas* (guerrilla fighters) has had a debilitating effect on the Kurdish struggle within Iran. In 1987, KOMALAH's central committee called for the establishment of a Kurdish united front against the armed forces of the Islamic Republic.²⁵ However, the KDPI and KOMALAH have yet to forge a united front in their struggle for Kurdish autonomy. Perhaps the ideological incompatibility of the two groups will prevent the formation of any lasting alliance between these two major Kurdish groups in Iran.

Iraq

The Kurdish Democratic Party—Provisional Leadership

The Iraqi Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) was founded in 1946 by a group of Iraqi Kurdish intellectuals. The legendary Kurdish tribal leader, Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who had been in the forefront of the Kurdish struggle since 1923, took on the leadership of the KDP. Under Barzani's tutelage, the KDP developed into a potent guerrilla organisation which staged major battles against a succession of Iraqi regimes.

The success of the KDP against the Iraqi regime compelled the Shah of Iran to view the party as an effective channel of destabilisation of his archrival, the Baathi government in Baghdad. As I have argued elsewhere, Mullah Mustafa, with the financial and military support of the Shah, Israel and the USA, managed to engage the Iraqi troops for over four years in protracted guerrilla warfare, inflicting heavy casualties on the Iraqi forces.²⁶ Barzani's overreliance on the Shah proved to be a catastrophic strategic error for the KDP. The Algiers Agreement of 1975, signed between the Shah and Iraq's Saddam Hussein, brought to an abrupt end the supply of Iranian weapons to Barzani's *peshmergas*. After the Algiers Agreement, the KDP was confronted with internal disarray; Mullah Mustafa's prestige had suffered a crushing blow, leaving him depressed and defeated in spirit. However, his sons, Idris and Massoud, reconstructed a wing of the KDP under the banner of the Kurdish Democratic Party—Provisional Leadership, and continued to fight the Iraqi regime. Although the KDP—Provisional Leadership had been weakened by the death in July 1987 of Idris Barzani (ostensibly from a heart attack), the party under Massoud's leadership has

continued to be a major recipient of aid from the Islamic Republic and a supporter of Iran against Iraq. Moreover, the KDP—Provisional Leadership has occasionally engaged the *peshmergas* of the KDPI and KOMALAH in their fight against the Islamic Republic, hence losing some legitimacy as the Kurdish ally of the Islamic Republic.

The Kurdish Democratic Party—Baath

This party also originated after the demise of Mullah Mustafa's struggle in 1975, when a group of his allies and associates decided to accept the limited autonomy offered the Kurds by the Iraqi regime in return for the cessation of armed hostilities against the Baathi government. Under the leadership of Hashim Hassan Aqrabi, the KDP—Baath has taken an active role in the limited administration of the Iraqi Kurdish region, which now officially includes Dahuk, Irbil and Sulaymanieh, but not the coveted oil-rich Kurdish area of Kirkuk. Likewise, the KDP—Baath's legitimacy has been eroded by the party's close association with the Baathi government.

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

Led by Jalal Talabani, a former ally of Mullah Mustafa, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is now the largest Iraqi Kurdish movement. The genesis of the PUK dates back to November 1975 when a group of radical KDP members accused Mullah Mustafa Barzani of betraying the Kurdish cause by striking a Faustian bargain with the Shah and his Western supporters and causing the defeat of the Kurdish resistance.

Subsequently, these disenchanted members of the KDP organised their own movement, the PUK. The tension between the KDP and Talabani dates back to the early 1960s, when Mullah Mustafa Barzani signed a ceasefire with the Iraqi regime without the approval of the KDP Politburo led by Nuri Taha, Omar Mustafa, Ibrahim Ahmad and Jalal Talabani. The KDP Politburo issued a strong condemnation of Barzani, denouncing him as an opportunist who would aggrandise his own political fortunes and tribal interest above the goal of Kurdish autonomy. The relationship between Mullah Mustafa and the KDP Politburo remained tense throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as the former pursued his own separate agenda in defence of Kurdish causes. Mullah Mustafa's disastrous strategy of an alliance with the Shah and his supporters was viewed as yet another unilateral move by Barzani, which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the Kurdish resistance. This organisation has undergone several stages of ideological transformation, and its alliance

patterns have been unpredictable. As a nationalist movement with a socialist orientation, the PUK remained in the forefront of Kurdish resistance against Iraq until 1983. However, in a major turnaround, Talabani then announced that the PUK had accepted a ceasefire with Saddam Hussein's regime and would entertain the idea of limited autonomy under the circumstances. As one PUK official stated: 'At least we can talk to Saddam Hussein . . . Khomeini has killed 20,000 Iranian Kurds and sees all minorities as agents of Satan.'²⁷ However, the PUK's hoped-for cultural and social autonomy for the Kurds never materialised, and the party once again shifted towards a new alliance of convenience with Syria and Iran, the Iraqi government's two major antagonists in the region. This shift in policy was facilitated when, in 1986, the PUK and the KDP—Provisional Leadership sought to unify their forces on utilitarian grounds, in order to fight more effectively against the Iraqi forces which had been spread thinly at the height of the Gulf War. The PUK-KDP rapprochement led to the formation of the Iraq Kurdistan Front (IKF) in 1987. The IKF, which included all anti-Saddam Hussein Iraqi Kurds, operated effectively against the superior Iraqi forces, and at times controlled a large area of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Turkey

The status of the Kurds in Turkey raises a number of disturbing issues. Almost half of the total Kurdish population of 19 million reside in Turkey. As I mentioned earlier, the Kurds in Turkey, unlike the Iranian and Iraqi Kurds, are not a recognised minority and have become victimised by government policies that aim to deny their very existence. The current Turkish policy towards the Kurds has its roots in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ambitious attempts in the immediate post-World War I period to create a new Turkish nation from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. In order to create a modern Turkish state with a distinct national identity of its own, Atatürk promoted a 'Turkish only' policy in arts, culture, education and politics. Even Ismet Inönü, Atatürk's long-time ally and successor, was discouraged from revealing his Kurdish heritage.

As a consequence of Turkey's longstanding suppression of non-Turkish ethno-nationalism, the vast majority of Turkish Kurds living in urban areas have been 'completely assimilated in Turkish society and no longer even speak Kurdish'.²⁸ This has given sustenance to the highly dubious argument by Turkish authorities that the Kurds are actually 'mountain Turks who have forgotten their native tongue' and

are now returning to their Turkish origins.²⁹ Neither the forceful assimilation of urban Kurds into Turkish society nor suppression has succeeded in retarding ethnic consciousness among the vast majority of the Kurds in Turkey who are rural dwellers and continue to speak Kurdish at home and practise the Kurdish way of life. Furthermore, Turkey's oppressive policy towards its Kurdish citizens has remained a stumbling block in the country's attempts to gain membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), as the EEC has insisted on Ankara's recognition of the Kurdish minority as a precondition for Turkey's membership.³⁰

Kurdish political movements in Turkey in recent years have gravitated towards the country's left and have operated under its aegis whenever the left was allowed to operate openly and contest elections in Turkey. The Turkish Workers Party (TWP), for example, was the first political party with parliamentary representation that took up the Kurdish cause. In its fourth congress in October 1970, the TWP took the unusual step of publicly declaring that Turkey was a multi-ethnic country in which the dominant Turks have suppressed the Kurds.³¹ The suppression of the Turkish left by the Turkish military, which began in the mid-1970s, also brought to an end any overt manifestation or discussion of the existence of the Kurdish ethnic minority in the country. Nevertheless, Kurdish movements do operate with varying degrees of success today.

The Workers Party of Kurdistan

The Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) is the most radical Kurdish movement for autonomy operating in Turkey today. The PKK originated in 1974 when a small group of Kurdish university students in Ankara organised the so-called Ankara Democratic Patriotic Association of Higher Education to demand the recognition of Kurdish culture and language by Turkish authorities. This organisation soon expanded the scope of its activities beyond the university circles and became involved with other leftist parties in Turkey.³²

Like KOMALAH in Iran, the PKK blends Marxism-Leninism with a strong dose of Kurdish nationalistic ethos. It strongly advocates the establishment of a Kurdish Marxist republic in Kurdish areas of Turkey as well as those in Iran, Iraq and Syria. Under the command of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK has launched successful operations in eastern Turkey. The Turkish regular army has had little success in containing the hit-and-run tactics of the PKK guerrillas. In response,

Prime Minister Turgut Ozal has ordered the creation of a special counter-insurgency strike force, consisting of some 5,000 well-trained and well-equipped soldiers to fight what the Turkish government has acknowledged to be rampant 'terrorism' in the eastern (Kurdish) provinces. In addition, Turkey has reached an agreement with Syria, on whose territory most PKK bases are located, for a wide-ranging cooperative scheme to contain cross-border raids into Turkey. Furthermore, the Turkish government has announced a massive development programme in southeastern Turkey to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Kurds.³³ None of these measures have yet forced the PKK to scale down its successful armed struggle against the central government in Ankara.

The Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan

The SPTK was established in 1974 by some Kurdish members of the TWP. Its membership base is narrow and largely confined to Kurdish urban intellectuals and some segments of the country's trade unions. Most of the SPTK's leadership has been arrested or exiled; the exiled leadership operates principally from Sweden, where Kemal Burkey, the party's secretary general, resides. Unlike the PKK, the SPTK espouses the principle of coexistence of the Kurds and Turks within a truly federated state 'if the principles of equality are observed'.³⁴

The Iran-Iraq war and the Kurds

The Gulf War once again catapulted the Kurds into the limelight of international politics. The war also provided the Kurds with opportunities and pitfalls in the realisation of their goals. Both Iran and Iraq endeavoured to use their Kurdish population as a buffer zone and as an added element in their war efforts.

Iraq was the first to play its 'Kurdish card' in January 1981, when the Iraqi government established a supply route to the KDPI's *peshmergas*, who were fighting the Iranian *pasdaran* (revolutionary guards) near the Kurdish cities of Qasr-e Shirin and Nowdesheh. The control of Nowdesheh was Iraq's prime objective, as the city's strategic location would allow Baghdad to deny Iran the use of the Baghdad Tehran highway. The Iraqis were successful in overwhelming the relatively small *pasdaran* and regular Iranian military units stationed in that area. With Iraq's acquiescence, the KDPI's Qassemlou established a major operational headquarters in Nowdesheh and launched a three-month offensive against the *pasdaran* with a considerable amount of success.

Beginning in April 1981, the KDPI, aided by other Kurdish *peshmerga* and Iraqi weapons, managed to force the *pasdaran* units out of major cities in Iranian Kurdistan, including the garrison city of Sanandaj. The KDPI then contemplated a frontal attack on the city of Mahabad and the establishment of a 'liberated Kurdish zone' in the same fashion as the Kurds who had set up the ill-fated Kurdish Republic of Mahabad some forty-five years earlier.

By April 1982, the Iraqi forces had suffered a number of defeats at the hands of the Iranian forces in the Kurdish areas and had retreated further inside their own territory to regroup. Consequently, the fortunes of the KDPI changed in May 1982 when the Iranian ground forces under the command of Colonel Sayyad Shirazi launched a sustained attack on the KDPI's forces and bases. Colonel Shirazi's strategy was simple yet quite effective. He first coaxed the KDPI's *peshmergas* to spread themselves thinly and then encircled Qassemloo's overstretched forces and dealt them a devastating blow. Qassemloo's hopes of creating a 'liberated Kurdish zone' all but vanished, and the KDPI was reduced to a marginal Iraqi instrument in the Gulf War.³⁵

For its part, Iran began to regard the Iraqi Kurds as a potential destabilising factor against Saddam Hussein's government. Iran's Kurdish strategy during the course of the Iran-Iraq war proved to be more successful than that of Iraq, as the Islamic Republic managed to acquire the support of Massoud and Idris Barzani's KDP, and the support of the PUK in its war efforts during the last two years of the war. The success of Kurdish forces in keeping Iraqi forces at bay heightened the Turkish fear of the spill-over effect on Turkey's Kurdish region, inspired by the success of the Iraqi Kurds. This prompted Turkey to dispatch expeditionary forces to Iraq to fight the Kurdish *peshmergas*. Turkey's attacks on the Iranian Kurdish allies brought a sharp rebuke from Tehran, which accused Turkey of helping Iraq in the Gulf War.³⁶ The Turks retorted that their policy of protecting Iraq's Kirkuk-Iskenderun oil pipeline was motivated purely by economic considerations, as the pipeline supplied one-third of Turkey's oil needs and provided the country with an additional \$300 million per year in rental fees.³⁷

On balance, the Iranian side was more successful than the Iraqi side in playing the 'Kurdish card' in the Gulf War. By 1987, even one-time Marxist-Leninist Jalal Talabani was echoing Tehran's call for the establishment of an Islamic Republic of Iraq.³⁸ Tragically, the success of the Kurdish forces against the Iraqis in the battlefield prompted Iraq to resort to the use of chemical weapons against its own Kurdish citizens.

Early in 1988, the Iraqi Kurdish town of Halabja which had been controlled by the KDP—Provisional Leadership became the scene of one of the most gruesome massacres in recent Kurdish history. The Iraqi forces, using a combination of mustard gas and other internationally outlawed chemical substances, attacked Halabja on 16–17 March 1988, killing 5,000 inhabitants of the town. The indiscriminate use of chemical weapons against defenceless Kurdish civilians was indeed a war crime, the magnitude of which was initially suppressed by Iraq's denial of the Kurdish massacre.³⁹

Although the scale of the massacre at Halabja was unprecedented, even in the context of the Gulf War, the Iraqis had previously resorted to the use of chemical weapons on numerous occasions during the course of the Iran-Iraq war. The United Nations Security Council on three different occasions had passed resolutions admonishing Iraq for using chemical weapons in the war. Ironically, the USA in its zeal not to be perceived as siding with Iran, prevented the approval of stronger measures by the UN against the Iraqi government. Only after the Halabja massacre did the Reagan administration issue its first condemnation of Iraq for resorting to chemical warfare.

The acceptance of the UN Security Council resolution 598 by Iran in July 1988 and the subsequent ceasefire in the Gulf War did not bring a shift in Iraq's repressive policies towards its Kurdish population. Amnesty International in its appeal to the UN Security Council on 8 September 1988 condemned the continuing systematic attacks on the Kurdish villages by Iraqi soldiers 'using overwhelming force, including chemical weapons . . . the mass killings are part of a systematic and deliberate policy by the Iraqi government to eliminate large numbers of Kurds'.⁴⁰ Iraq's vengeful attacks on the Kurds have resulted in a massive influx of Iraqi Kurds to Turkey and Iran since the end of the Iran-Iraq war. By October 1988 some 60,000 Kurds had fled to Turkey alone, causing the Turkish press and Prime Minister Turgut Ozal to give sympathetic accounts of the plight of an ethnic minority long suppressed in Turkey itself. Although Turkey will continue to view Kurdish ethno-nationalism with great suspicion, Turkish political parties seem to have 'suddenly become aware that votes can be won by wooing the ordinary, non-violent peasants of the eastern [Kurdish] provinces'.⁴¹

Of the 60,000 Kurds who fled to Turkey in 1988, some 17,000 have requested voluntary transfer to Iran where they could join Massoud Barzani's KDP. The UN authorities have registered 15,000 Kurdish refugees in Iran since the ceasefire in the Gulf War came into effect.⁴²

However, the Islamic Republic has notified the Turkish and UN authorities that Iran is not capable of accommodating large numbers of Kurdish refugees, in view of the country's war-devastated economy and the fact that it is already hosting 2 million Afghan refugees. The Kurds once more have become the victims of the *realpolitik* and international relations of the region.

Conclusion

The emergence and development of the modern nation-state system in the Middle East has failed to respond to the demands of ethnic nationalism in the region's mosaic of nations. In today's Middle East milieu, some governments 'not only fail to protect minority groups adequately but also systematically seek to destroy cultural values, deny ethnic identity, and even adopt policies that border on genocide'.⁴³ Such policies have been implemented with regard to the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq in varying degrees. They have also contributed to an increasingly Kurdish ethnic discontent which has led to the creation of Kurdish political organisations that have challenged the legitimacy and, at times, the very existence of the territorial nation-states within which they operate.

The geographic location of Kurdish areas in Turkey, Iran and Iraq has been an important factor in determining the viability and strength of Kurdish political organisations *vis-à-vis* the central governments in those countries. As Hooshang Amirahmadi has observed in his study of ethnic collective movements, territories located in 'mountainous or forest areas, or provinces bordering other states with similar ethnic populations, have engaged in ethnic collective movements more frequently and effectively than ethnic provinces in central locations and with flat bare plains'.⁴⁴ The vitality of Kurdish ethnic movements is invariably due to Kurdistan's border geography and mountainous terrain. By the same token, as the Kurdish case has demonstrated, geography can be a detrimental factor for an ethnic collective movement operating in a zone of great power rivalry and inter-regional conflicts. It is safe to assume that the goal of Kurdish independence is beyond reach in the foreseeable future, as is the total assimilation of the Kurds into the larger societies in which they live. However, some degree of Kurdish autonomy is possible within a genuine federal framework which respects the cultural aspirations of the ethnic Kurds in the Middle East.

Notes

- ¹ For a comprehensive study of the history of the Kurds until the end of the sixteenth century, see S Betlisi, *Shurafnameh*, Tehran: Elmi Publications. This book, originally written in 1596 in Persian by a prominent Kurd, still remains an invaluable source of historical data on the Kurds. See also A Ghassemlou, *Kurdistana and the Kurds*, London: Collet's, 1965, pp 33-45. G Chaliand (ed), *People Without a Country: the Kurds and Kurdistan*, London: Zed Press, 1980, and H Arfa, *The Kurds: an historical and political study*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp 1-32.
- ² N Entessar, 'Causal factors in Kurdish nationalism', in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium on Asian Studies, 1987*, Hong Kong: Asian Research Service, 1988, p 309.
- ³ *Ibid*, p 319, and Y Gotlieb, *Self-Determination in the Middle East*, New York: Praeger, 1982, pp 74-7.
- ⁴ R K Ramazani, 'The Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdish People's Republic: their rise and fall', in T Hammond (ed), *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975, pp 448-74, and A Roosevelt, Jr, 'Kurdish Republic of Mahabad', in G Chaliand, *People Without a Country*, pp 136-40.
- ⁵ G Chaliand (ed), *Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation States*, London: Pluto Press, 1989.
- ⁶ J Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: a conceptual framework*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, p 6.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p 72.
- ⁸ Quoted in D Menashri, 'The Shah and Khomeni: conflicting nationalisms', *Crossroads*, no 8, winter/spring 1982, p 65.
- ⁹ See, for example, R H Dekmejian, 'The anatomy of Islamic revival: legitimacy crisis, ethnic conflict and the search for Islamic alternatives', *Middle East Journal* 34(1) winter 1980, p 11, and R Khan, 'Religion, race, and Arab nationalism', *International Journal* 34(3) summer 1979, pp 353-68.
- ¹⁰ I Harik, 'The ethnic revolution and political integration in the Middle East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3(3) July 1972, p 303.
- ¹¹ N Entessar, 'The Kurds in post-revolutionary Iran and Iraq', *Third World Quarterly* 6(4) October 1984, p 914.
- ¹² For a detailed discussion of various Kurdish languages and dialects, see M Izady, 'A Kurdish lingua franca?' *Kurdish Times* 2(2) summer 1988, pp 13-24.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p 14.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in M Gunter, 'The Kurdish problem in Turkey', *Middle East Journal* 42(3) summer 1988, p 399.
- ¹⁵ See N Entessar, 'The Kurds in post-revolutionary Iran and Iraq', p 918, and Ath-thawra (Central Organ of the Baath Party), *Settlement of the Kurdish Problem in Iraq*, Baghdad: Ath-thawra Publications, pp 111-22. See also F Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981.
- ¹⁶ M Izady, 'The question of an ethnic identity: problems in the historiography of Kurdish migrations and settlement', *Kurdish Times* 1(1) 1986, pp 16-18.
- ¹⁷ S Siaband, 'Mountains, my home: an analysis of the Kurdish psychological landscape', *Kurdish Times* 2(2) summer 1988, p 7.
- ¹⁸ See *Barnameh va Asashnameh-e Hezb-e Demokrat-e Kurdistan-e Iran* (Fourth Congress of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran) 19-23 February 1980, Mahabad, Iran.
N Alaolmolk, 'The new Iranian left', *Middle East Journal* 41(2) spring 1987, p 230.
For details, see N Mohajer, 'Ensheat dar Hezb-e Demokrat-e Kurdistan-e Iran' (A division within the Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party), *Aghaz-e-Ya*, no 7, summer 1988, pp 25-9.
See *Junbish-e Mogavemat-e Khlaq-e Kurd va Komalah* (The Resistance Movement of the Kurdish masses and Komalah), document series 2, 1980.
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Kurdistan', *Bolshevik Message* (a publication of the Communist Party of Iran--the Committee Abroad), July 1987, pp 1-3.

²⁶ N Entessar, 'The Kurds in post-revolutionary Iran and Iraq', pp 918-19.

²⁷ Quoted in *The Middle East*, no 112, February 1984, p 10.

²⁸ M Gunter, 'The Kurdish problem in Turkey', p 391.

²⁹ V Beaudin Saeedpour, 'The Kurdish way of life in Turkey: a tapestry of tribulations', *Kurdish Times* 1(1) 1986, p 7.

³⁰ See H Skutel, 'Turkey's Kurdish problem', *International Perspectives* 16(1) January 1988, pp 22-5.

³¹ Kendal, 'Kurdistan in Turkey', in G Chaliand, *People Without a Country*, p 97.

³² For details, see M van Bruinessen, 'The Kurds in Turkey', *MERIC Reports*, no 121, February 1984, pp 6-12.

³³ S Cohen, 'Turkey pursues two-track policy to stem Kurdish violence', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 27 July 1987, p 11.

³⁴ M Gunter, 'The Kurdish problem in Turkey', p 394.

³⁵ See E O'Ballance, *The Gulf War*, London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988, pp 132-6.

³⁶ 'Turks smooth Iraqi feathers', *Iran Times* (Washington DC), 5 September 1986, p 15.

³⁷ S Cohen, 'Gulf war worries Turkey', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 30 October 1986, p 9.

³⁸ C van England, 'War heats up on Iraq's northern front', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 26 May 1987, p 11.

³⁹ J Johnson, 'US adamant in charge against Iraq', *New York Times*, 10 September 1988, p 4.

⁴⁰ 'Amnesty takes concerns over Iraqi massacre to UN', *Amnesty Action* (New York), September-October 1988, p 1.

⁴¹ K Mackenzie, 'Turkey, Iraq and the Kurds', *Middle East International*, no 334, 23 September 1988, p 11. Also, see O Karasapan, 'Gulf war refugees in Turkey', *Middle East Report* 19(1) January-February 1989, pp 33-4.

⁴² 'Iran slams door on Kurd refugee influx', *Iran Times* (Washington DC), 21 October 1988, p 16.

⁴³ C MacDonald, 'The Kurdish question in the 1980s', in M Esmun and I Rabinovich (eds), *Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p 233.

⁴⁴ H Amurrahadi, 'A theory of ethnic collective movements and its application to Iran', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 10(4) October 1987, p 369.

Maronite hegemony to Maronite militancy: the creation and disintegration of Lebanon

The role and cause of Maronite militancy are factors in the political disintegration of Lebanon which require examination. Apart from the book by Jonathan Randall,¹ there has been little serious study in English that has attempted to analyse the Maronite factor in the Lebanese tragedy.

My main thesis is that Maronitism, because of the way it defines Maronite identity, shares with Zionism many of the ideological mythologies that informed the creation of the state of Israel as a Jewish state. The ideological commonality stems from the shared commitment to the exclusion of other groups, both socially and politically. Contemporary Maronitism, in response to demographic and ideological challenges to its hegemony, sought to emulate the Jewish state by creating a Christian majority and Christian-dominated state in present-day Lebanon using the same ideological strategy as Zionism, but it failed. The failure can be attributed to many factors, but primarily to historical timing and context, and the degree of Maronite ideological self-delusion.

In spite of the various formulas (the Grand Liban, autonomous Mount Lebanon, the cantonal system) promoted by different Maronite political parties, with the exception of that segment of the community that favoured Arabism, the strategic goal of Maronite dominance in Lebanon (however it is defined geographically) was the same, though the tactics varied.

During the 1940s, which were dominated by President Bishara Khoury, the concept of Lebanese national interests within the communal safeguards of the National Pact held sway. The late 1960s and early 1970s, dominated by the figure of Bashir Gemayel and the Kaslik monks of the University of the Holy Spirit, ushered in the isolationist era with its clear focus on the re-establishment of Maronite-Christian hegemony and demographic preponderance in Lebanon. The earlier period had accepted Maronite demographic and political preponderance as the norm, while during the later period its demise

was feared at worst, and its reduction at best. Both periods and approaches assumed a Maronite right to political hegemony in Lebanon.

In this article, I shall review the ideological evolution of the Maronites of Lebanon that led first to the establishment of Maronite identity and hegemony in the early stages of Lebanon, and second to the Maronite militancy of the 1970s and 1980s, the culmination of which was the disintegration of the Lebanese state.

Historical background

Mount Lebanon received a Maronite Christian population from northern Syria in the seventh century, and a population of Druzes (an offshoot of Shia Islam) from Fatamid Egypt during the tenth and eleventh centuries. During the Ottoman period, which began in the sixteenth century in geographic Syria, Mount Lebanon managed to retain relative autonomy. The later Western imperial drive into the region saw the French courting the Maronites as their clients and future surrogates in the area, and the British courting the Druzes. Internal and external factors contributed to Maronite-Druzes conflict which culminated in the massacres of the 1860s. Nevertheless, relative calm was restored in the area for approximately fifty years prior to World War I.

At the end of World War I, France secured a League of Nations Mandate over Lebanon, and in 1920 proclaimed the Grand Liban, which included not only Mount Lebanon, but also what came to be known as the disputed territories (including the coastal cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre, as well as southern Lebanon and the eastern Beka'a valley which were traditionally parts of geographic Syria). The new borders brought with them enlarged Sunni and Shia Muslim populations. The changed demographic composition was to become the basis for conflict, as the Muslim population later began to outnumber the Christian population.

In 1926, Lebanon became a republic: a Constitution was promulgated and its first president elected. In 1941, Lebanon was proclaimed independent by the Free French Government, and French troops finally left in 1946. It has since had two civil wars (in 1958 and 1975-76), and continues to be in total disarray.

Identity and polity

A variety of interpretations have been offered regarding the causes of the present Lebanese disintegration and the bases for its solution.² The problem is that they lack full consensus. However, one independent variable, the question of identity, and its dependent variable, the form of polity, stand out as primary factors in the Lebanese equation. The majority of Maronites have consistently denied their Arabism and have tended to identify with the West, while the Muslims and other Christians have tended to identify with Arabism. As independence approached, the issue of identity raised the political issue of how Lebanon should govern itself, given its differing orientations, and how it should relate to regional and international issues and actors. At one extreme were the models of an autonomous Maronite Mount Lebanon or the pluralistic Grand Liban, which nonetheless had a distinctively Western, Christian (read Maronite) face and orientation. At the other extreme was a position later re-articulated by the Lebanese National Movement programme of the 1970s, which asserted Lebanon to be an Arab state (an assertion made earlier at the 1936 Conference of the Coast), and called for a secular Lebanese national system based on one vote per person.

The way in which the questions of identity and polity were ultimately conceptualised for independent Lebanon is embodied in the National Pact, often called the Covenant, of 1943. In that unwritten agreement, several features stand out that finally shaped Lebanon for some thirty years:

1 Lebanon was to have an Arab face and a Western face.

2 The Maronites would agree not to seek foreign protection as they had in the past from France, nor to have Lebanon serve as a base for Western imperialism into the Arab interior.³

3 The Muslims conceded that Lebanon was to remain a separate, sovereign state which would not be forced to unite with other Arab states in a pan-Arab nation. The confessional basis of political representation was established in which parliament would have a 6:5 ratio favouring Christians. The president would always be a Maronite; the prime minister a Sunni Muslim; the speaker of the house a Shia Muslim. Matters of personal code would be governed by sectarian doctrine.

Lebanese leaders claimed that the Pact would bring together the two Lebanons (Christian and Muslim) that had prevailed from 1920 to 1943 to form one Lebanese nation.⁴ At face value the National Pact appeared

to be a solution to Lebanese sectarian particularisms. However, it was more an expedient formula with no party accepting it in full. In fact, no sooner had World War II ended than a publication (assumed to be Maronite-produced) was distributed internationally, calling for Lebanon to become a national home for Christians in the Middle East.⁵ In 1946, a controversial interview with Maronite Bishop Mubarak appeared in the *Palestine Post*. In it, he expressed support for the Zionist cause in Palestine, and '... he went on to say that the Christians of Lebanon knew that Lebanon's progress was tied to Palestine's, a progress that Zionism would foster'.⁶ In short, the National Pact was not a viable vehicle for a strong Lebanese polity. Not only did the Maronites immediately violate its terms, but it had also failed to include other Lebanese sectarian communities in the agreement in any significant way. It formalised a number of sectarian nations within one state, each vying for power or retention of the National Pact. Although the founders of the National Pact claimed that it would be a stage leading to the formation of a secular Lebanese nationalist state, the very structure it created froze Lebanon into sectarian identities and mini-nations.

The National Pact model was accepted in place of other models of identity and polity that were developing in the pre- and post-World War I Arab world in the climate of ideological debate about the future. Islamic *umma* was unacceptable to Christians, as was Islamic Arab nationalism. Secular Arab nationalism was actually conceptualised and promoted by Arab Christians, many of whom were Maronites. The fourth and fifth alternatives were separate and independent Arab states based on secularism or on Islam, and separate states based on an integration of secularism and Islam. Secular Arab nationalism, especially in its later socialist form, became the most popular ideology in the Arab world. In spite of various attempts to develop an Arab nation, Arab nationalism failed to achieve the goal of one Arab nation-state. Instead, separate states formed (whether fuelled ideologically by Islamic content, by secular content, or by a mixture), which fell in and out of various regional alliances. However, each of these states played the Arab nationalist game while strengthening themselves internally. Lebanon did not take the route of proclaiming Arabism while building a strong separate polity within. Maronites feared Arab nationalism, which they insisted was really a screen for Islam. They reacted to it as though it already existed throughout the Arab world, waiting only to absorb Lebanon into its body politic.

Lebanon did not have to travel the pan-Arab route only to play the

pan-Arab game from a position of national unity and state strength. Lebanese Maronites preferred the Pact formula, based on the preservation of Maronite identity and hegemony while 'legally' defending their identity against an Arab nationalist movement assumed to be capable of overtaking them otherwise. The institutionalised defensiveness gave shape to the weakest polity in the Arab region, incapable of having a relatively equal voice in Arab matters. It created a state that reacted rather than acted in the region. Clearly, the attempt to guarantee Maronite identity and hegemony through a weak state was basic to the ultimate disintegration of Lebanon. The Sunnis accepted the Pact as an easy gesture to make in return for reasonable power in the state. Moreover, they felt secure that they were underpinned by the larger Sunni Arab community surrounding Lebanon. Both Maronites and Sunnis had assessed the Lebanese and Arab situation incorrectly in accepting the National Pact formula.

Lebanon was neither a coherent nation-state expressing a Lebanese nationalism, nor was it 'part' of the pan-Arab movement. It had succeeded in becoming a member of the Arab League at its founding in 1945, on condition that it be excluded from Arab issues (except in the most tangential way). It established legal recognition of its separate status and sovereignty, which set the tone for the structure of the League: cooperation without political Arab national unity. From the very beginning of the League, it was clear that pan-Arabism was not a serious goal, as its structure demonstrated. However, it was also clear that no Arab state (including Lebanon) could stay aloof from Arab regional issues.

Lebanon did not fit any of the ideological and political options followed by other Arab states. In fact, the choice of a confessional system coupled with asserted separateness from the Arab world was shortsighted. Even the relatively coherent Egypt could not stay out of Arab political life either during its earlier or later 'Egypt first' periods. The issues of the Arab region cannot be contained within state borders. But Egypt, like other strong Arab states, can often shape and choose the way she interacts in the region. There were some attempts to develop a national secular formula in Lebanon in 1943. Some saw the National Pact as the first step towards establishing a secular state in Lebanon, but in fact it reinforced and further defined the earlier sectarian-based structure which, when challenged, was to throw Lebanon into chaos and harden sectarian positions in the contemporary period.

The emergence of contemporary Maronitism

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Maronite leadership, especially the ideologues of the Phalanges party, began to fear the loss of community solidarity based on a Maronite identity that would culminate in the weakening or even loss of Maronite hegemony in Lebanon. In the interim of the two civil wars (1958-75), political parties with progressive slogans arose and began to attract adherents whose identity transcended religious affiliation.⁷

The growth of the Lebanese National Movement in the 1960s and 1970s under the leadership of the late Druzes leader, Kamal Jumblatt (representing a coalition of the left, the Arab nationalist Sunni middle class, and endorsed by the PLO, whose cause the movement favoured), gave rise to Maronite fears that the confessional system would be gutted. The Nationalist Movement favoured a complete structural change to a system based on secular concepts. The fact that Christians were no longer the preponderant group in Lebanon, coupled with a growing secular Lebanese Nationalist Movement with *de facto* support of the Palestinian movement, spelled inevitable confrontation with the Maronites. The Maronites had previously felt that the National Pact, combined with assumed support from the West, would solve the dual problem of keeping their identity exclusive and assuring their permanent political control of the state, whatever the demographic changes. However, when they realised that this could not now be done, they turned to Israel to help them redesign Lebanon into a Christian, Zionist-type state. Hence in the 1970s, Maronites embarked on a course in cooperation with, and under the guidance of Zionist leaders in Israel and the USA.

Israel had long sought to establish a Maronite state⁸ in Lebanon as a way of proving that only sectarian states are possible in the Middle East (and hence that a Jewish state is legitimate), whereas the PLO favoured the Lebanese National Movement's programme of establishing a democratic secular state in Lebanon – the PLO's adopted goal for Palestine. The success of the Lebanese National Movement was important to the PLO, therefore, as a challenge to Israeli sectarian particularism. Allegations by the Maronite leadership and allied Christian individuals that the PLO wanted to take over Lebanon were never supported by Lebanese intellectuals and activists. Nonetheless, they were given credence in the eyes of Maronites and other Christian Lebanese citizens by the offensive behaviour and aggression of radical Palestinian

guerrilla groups against Lebanese right-wing strongholds. The success of Maronitism was important to Israel as a challenge to the PLO's concept of a democratic, pluralist, secular state. Hence Israel contributed to the rumour of a PLO takeover and claimed that it was itself protecting Christians.⁹

Fear of loss of control and identity led, therefore, to the emergence of a Maronite militancy encouraged and supported by Israel. The Maronite leadership, centred in the person of Bashir Gemayel, drew on a heavy stock of Maronite ideological mythology which dates back to the seventeenth century, and became further elaborated by the more recent, but now passé ideologues. This ideological mythology served to remind, re-energise and recommit Maronites to their identity and their assumed rights and role in Lebanon. Its similarity to Zionism meant that Maronites found a relationship with Zionists quite 'natural'.

The similarity of Maronite and Zionist ideology stemmed from a common desire for exclusivity of kind and political control of the state, but the actual sources are different. Israel is a colonial settler state and has all the attributes of such a state, among which are racism and the use of superior force to exclude indigenous people. Zionist ideology served to put a noble face on exclusion. Coincident interests with British imperialism guaranteed early British support in the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state. Later coincident Israeli-US interests have maintained the consequences of the Zionist transformation of Palestine.

Indigenous to Lebanon, Maronites are not colonial settlers. Given their long history of association with the West, most of them do not consider themselves as belonging to the Arab Muslim peoples or cultures. Therefore, the attempts by some after World War I to establish a Christian state on Mount Lebanon reflected a desire not to be absorbed by the Arab masses around them. The Pact formed a compromise that permitted Maronite hegemony within a Grand Liban that encompassed other sectarian groups, especially Sunni and Shia Muslims. When the Pact was threatened by demographic changes and regional politics, the isolationist trend re-emerged among the new Maronite leadership of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The issues of retaining Maronite identity and community solidarity by control of the state crystallised. The interests of Bashir Gemayel's Maronite followers coincided with those of Israel. Israel represented the role model for what the isolationists hoped to achieve, even though Gemayel was to change his tune after the 1982 war (see below). In the 1970s Maronitism served to put a noble face on its goal of exclusion.

Parallel mythologies

An examination of the contents of Maronite mythology is instructive for our understanding of the recent events in Lebanon and will bring out its parallel features with Zionist mythology. Maronite and Zionist mythologies have three basic components.

1 The Maronites/Jews have always constituted a nation and Lebanon/Palestine are their original and exclusive homelands. Only when the Maronites succeeded in creating the myth of an historical nation were they able to translate that assumed nationhood into political legitimacy, unity, action and power.

There are at least three interpretations of Maronite origins. Given that the Maronites migrated from northern Syria to Mount Lebanon, and that they continue to use Syriac liturgies,¹⁰ it is now accepted that their origins are Syriac-Aramean, of Semitic peoples who lived in ancient Syria and Mesopotamia (Iraq).

In the seventh century, Maronites began to migrate from Syria to Mount Lebanon. They settled in villages and built their churches as fortresses against the outside world. Family, village and church were the main group contexts for Maronites; there was no overall structure linking villages into a concept of nationhood or community until well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The common identity as Maronites was insufficient to build national bonds. As Matti Moosa and other historians point out, 'No historian, Syrian or otherwise, has referred to the Maronites as a denomination as early as the eighth century, or attributed to them the characteristics of a nation; this appellation was first used by seventeenth-century Maronites, particularly al-Duwayhi.'¹¹

2 Maronites/Jews are each a morally unique and enlightened nation. The Maronites claim that they have always followed the Latin Church, and were never a part of the monophysite heresy. The connection to the Latin Church directly, and the French indirectly, gave Maronites the notion that they are a people apart (or 'chosen') from those in the immediate environment.

However, historical records indicate that the formal union with Rome did not come about until 1180.¹² At the beginning of the Crusades (in 1099) the Latin Church still viewed the Maronites as heretics. Not all Maronites agreed with the union and many anti-union Maronites

attacked the uniate churches and killed the priests.¹³ And not all heretical practices were 'corrected' by the representatives of the Pope who were sent to put the Maronites on the 'right' road. Over the years the Maronites fell away from the Church, though in the mid-fifteenth century Franciscan missionaries were successful in bringing Maronites back to union with Rome.¹⁴ During this period Rome embarked on an education programme, training Maronite priests, to ensure Maronite union with the Church.

It was through the Latin Church, therefore, that the Maronites eventually became a structured community in Lebanon, with hierarchy and institutions defined beyond the village level. Later clergy such as the eighteenth-century Archbishop Duwayhi began to give Maronites an ethnic mould and identified Mount Lebanon as the homeland.¹⁵ Although the Ottoman Empire extended into the area in the sixteenth century, Mount Lebanon maintained a degree of autonomy, which was reinforced by the signing of the 1740 capitulations. Fighting continued between various factions and from village to village, but eventually the myths of nationhood and historical ties to the Latin Church were accepted as reality. From the foundation of these twin myths, Maronites elucidated their special mission in the area.

3 Maronites/Jews, because of their enlightened morality, have a special mission to bring light and progress to the peoples of the Arab East. Maronites insist that they have a commitment to universalism (respect for all while keeping their own identity and values). Their special mission in the area stems from this universalism and is expressed as the enlightenment and openness that they have gained by bridging the Western and Eastern worlds. It is their Westernism, their Christianity that brings light to the area. It enables them to respect the diversity they experience in the East. Islam does not respect the full rights of non-Muslims; it is a closed society. Part and parcel of the myth is the belief that the area is presently made up of sectarian nations—Christianity and Judaism are the only faiths that tolerate and respect others. (Zionists tended to focus on technological and scientific progress as the promise of their 'mission' in the Arab East.)

Maronites offer proof of their openness and ability to carry out the special, moral mission by pointing out that they had been able to live under and provide support to the Emirates of Mount Lebanon that governed Christians and Druzes. They put forward the Emirates' period as an example of their tolerance and universalism. However, a coinci-

dence of interests in the Druzes and Maronite communities explains their cooperation during this period. The breakdown of the Emirates as the vehicle for the coexistence of Maronites and Druzes and other communal groups was completed in the 1840s.

By this time, the French and British were very active in the area and contributed to sectarian divisions and suspicions. This period is well known historically, and I will not dwell on it. It brought forth lay leaders such as Yusuf Karam (1832-89). His themes were the independence of Lebanon, Maronite supremacy and authority deriving from the people (rather than the hereditary feudal nobles that had emerged over the years).¹⁶ Tanyus Shidyaq (1794-1861) added to this, and began to absorb the idea of a Lebanese state into Maronite ideology.¹⁷ The 'Lebanonism' that was created remained a constant theme thereafter, with resurgences in the 1970s. 'Lebanonism' maintains that the state of Lebanon is the only free and democratic country in the Arab East, the only one which respects all humans and permits freedom to differ. This, as ideologues both old and new claim, stems from the content of Maronitism.

The role of France

The entry of French interests into the region in the nineteenth century helped to solidify Maronite ideological mythology. The French wanted the Maronites to play a role on their behalf: they used every means possible, including extensive financing, to ensure that French seminarians would teach Maronite priests, and hence ensure the structural and ideological linkage of Maronites to the West through acquisition of the French language and culture. France supported those religious orders that best effected French policy, turning to the Lazarists when the Jesuits seemed to have failed. The Lazarist college at Antoura was described in the archival records of the Lazarist missions as 'a corner of France in the Orient . . . Truly, Antoura and its college have to be more and more valued by all those who have the patriotic care of our national expansion across the world'.¹⁸

The Maronites were increasingly tied to the West through French culture and language, with the Latin Church as the connecting link. An exaggerated affectation of European superiority fed into the historic Maronite concept of their being a people apart, of having a special mission. Hence, at the time of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the Maronites were almost totally attached to France as a 'kindred spirit', saviour and protector of Maronitism.

In 1919 a selected delegation from Lebanon presented to the Paris Peace Conference the case for a Grand Liban (an enlarged Lebanon based on the map of an alleged historic Lebanon that had been drawn up by the French). A Maronite Patriarchal memorandum sent to the peace delegation requested three things: an independent Lebanon with economic ties to the Levant interior; 'restoration' of Lebanon within its former frontiers (perhaps alluding to the period of Fakhr al-Din's rule in Lebanon from 1586-1635 and including the original Mount Lebanon, Tripoli, the Beka'a, Baalbeck, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and the Marjayoun areas); and to be placed under French Mandate until independence.

Although a few Maronites had wanted Lebanon to be part of a larger Arab nation, the prominent Maronite leaders and their parties argued in favour either of a Grand Liban (Bishara Khoury's Constitutional Union) or an autonomous Mount Lebanon with a Christian majority (Emile Edde's National Bloc). The Grand Liban formula was adopted, but it was later established that the Maronites would be the most powerful group within it. The campaign of overseas Lebanese Christians in favour of the Grand Liban formula was similar to Zionist attempts to organise world Jewry on behalf of formation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Mokarzel, founder of the Lebanese League of Progress, asked France to grant Lebanese abroad the right to vote on the future of Lebanon.¹⁹ He also wrote a letter in October 1919 to Emir Faysal, the then recognised leader for the establishment of an Arab nation-state, asking 'Is it not abhorring to claim Lebanon as Arabian territory while you know or ought to study a little history to know that Lebanon was never subjected by any Beduin regime . . . My object in this letter is to respectfully ask you to let Lebanon alone . . .'²⁰

In September 1920, the French declared the existence of Grand Liban. Enlarged at geographic Syria's expense, it had a large Muslim population (both Sunni and Shia). Maronite and Sunni leadership worked out the privileged *modus vivendi* of the National Pact in 1943 while the Shia were left out. In the context of a Christian-Maronite-dominated state, and economic stratification that could only develop along sectarian lines (due to the confessional structure of the state) this led to the two Lebanese civil wars of 1958 and 1975-76.

Thus, unlike the Zionists, the Maronites immediately secured an enlarged territory, but one which contained a large Muslim population. Nonetheless, the Maronites depended on the French to assure their predominance in the state. On 29 August 1932, Emile Edde, then a deputy of the Lebanese Parliament, wrote a letter to the undersecretary

of state of France expressing concern over the sectarian imbalance that he foresaw. He wanted to rid Lebanon of non-Christians by creating autonomous sectarian areas for Shia and Sunnis.²¹ Again, however, he was defeated by the constitutionalists and their leader, Bishara Khoury.

It is important to note that while the Maronite isolationist trend of Emile Edde was defeated, the Grand Liban Maronite supporters felt that they could be dominant even in a larger pluralistic state. In many ways the ideologues of the 1970s were to 'fight' this battle once more, with the Lebanese Front and Lebanese Forces arguing for the reduction of non-Christians in Lebanon and the immigration of other Middle Eastern Christians. However, Bashir Gemayel and his brother successor, Amin Gemayel, argued for a united Lebanon with a dominant role secured for Maronites. The tactics were different but the strategic goals the same: Maronite hegemony which the Gemayels were convinced would be guaranteed by the USA, with Israeli support.

Resurgence of Maronite mythology

Demographic realities and the weaknesses inherent in the defensive confessional system began to catch up with Lebanon in the 1960s. They set into motion the Maronite desire to reassert political control by rallying their politically fragmented community against those defined as the causes of Lebanon's deteriorating condition: the Palestinians and the leftists. By 'cleansing' the area of these two groups (Muslims and other 'undesirables'), they would restore Lebanon to its important role in the area. Maronites again admired the success of the Jewish state and wished to imitate it. If total cleansing could not take place in Lebanon in the 1980s, they would settle for a cantonal structure in which Maronites would continue to be the pre-eminent power, ensuring that Lebanon would be 'free and respectful of others', and remain the 'beacon of light in the dark Arab East'. Hence, much effort went into promoting Lebanon as the 'Switzerland' of the Middle East, a screen to cover a possible system in which the Christian (Maronite) canton would be dominant.

In 1970 the full armour of the ideological mythologies was brought back into play; Israel and the USA replaced France. The first step that had to be taken was the organisation and training of militia (the Lebanese army was ineffective and split along sectarian lines). In addition to the Phalangists, and Chamoun's Tigers, other groups sprang up. Eventually Bashir Geyamel, by means of force, in the mid-1970s in-

tegrated the Christian militia under his command as the Lebanese Forces. The political arm was the Lebanese Front, in which the Phalanges party (founded by Bashir's father) was the most prominent. Eventually, the Lebanese Forces became the most important army and acted both as party and military.²²

The Maronite University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik became the source of ideological updating through its books and pamphlets. The Lebanese Order of Monks that founded the university fought alongside the militia: especially noteworthy was Father Sharbil Kassis. Additionally, the poet Sa'id Aql gathered a group of extremist intellectuals around him, and they founded the 'Ideological Reflection Club'. They produced a body of militant literature rooted in the classic themes of Maronite ideology.

In order to regroup the Maronite nation against Palestinians and leftist enemies (those who supported the Lebanese National Movement), they laid their first attack on the concept of Arab nationalism, claiming that it was a facade for Islam. Those who join progressive parties under the banner of Arab nationalism are accused of re-promoting an Islamic concept of society that has no room for non-Muslims. (It should be noted that the Lebanese National Movement was not oriented to Arab nationalism, but to Lebanese nationalism.)

These themes appear in many publications and speeches by ideologues of Maronitism such as Abbott Boulos Naaman (superior general of the Lebanese Maronite Order), Reverend Joseph Mouwanes (University of the Holy Spirit), the late Professor Charles Malik (former professor of philosophy at the American University of Beirut and a Greek Orthodox Christian who supported Maronite ideology) and Fouad Boustany (former president of Lebanese University).²³ They also arose in the interviews I conducted with some of the ideologues in June 1983 in Beirut. One is constantly struck by the insistence on keeping Christians, especially Maronites, exclusive from other groups. All of the ideologues interviewed in June 1983 expressed appreciation for the help that Israel and the USA were providing for their cause.

In the 1970s Bashir Gemayel and Malik, among others, began frequent visits to the USA to address the Lebanese-US Maronites and to seek their support. At first they tried to reawaken the previously supportive World Lebanese Cultural Union. Eventually, however, the Union was replaced by a new American Lebanese League, a Maronite organisation which attempted to serve the same role as the Zionist organisations do in the USA, and to combat Arab-US 'leftists'. They

were tutored by Zionists in the USA, just as the Lebanese Forces were trained and armed by Israel.

During the war of 1982, the Maronites had illusions that they could rely on the Israeli Defence Forces to terrorise Palestinians and other Muslims into fleeing to Syria. The strategy of terror that Zionists used (both prior to and after 1948) in Palestine to disperse and dispossess Palestinians did not work in Lebanon in 1982: the failures of the 1982 war are well known and need no review here.

The Maronites had played their hand, insisting on their exclusiveness and right to state control. In particular, their actions together with Israeli repression in the south opened the door to the uprising of the Shia movements. A former French diplomat writing in the 1970s made the point that the Shia population were natural allies of the Maronites since they had a vested interest in the confessional system. Being the largest single group in Lebanon, a redefinition and reallocation within the confessional system that would leave the Maronite presidency in place, but would give great representation and power to Shia, would have satisfied them.²⁴ However, the Maronites did not conceive of sharing power with the Shia, nor did Israelis seriously consider according them greater political power after the 1982 invasion, as some Shia expected. When the Shia realised this, they decided to follow the Khomeini model, with help both from Iran and Syria.

The failure of Maronitism

Rather than regaining hegemony in Lebanon, the Maronites and other Christian supporters witnessed the abandonment of support for their effort by Israel and the USA. They watched Lebanon fall into total disintegration, and ended up with a strong Syrian presence. They suffered the partial loss of southern Lebanon to Israeli occupation through its client South Lebanese Army, a continued Palestinian presence and the rise of a powerful, if divided, Shia movement. There are many reasons for this, but two stand out.

First, the gamble that the Maronites took came too late. Christian Zionism was not possible in the 1980s with well-entrenched and well-armed domestic communities, and solidified nation-states in the region. No external power was willing to effect Maronite will if Maronites could not carry the burden. Maronite Lebanon, in the end, was not seen as a viable client state for these external powers; since Lebanon was built on defensive institutions it lacked its own state strength.

Second, the Maronite leadership took its ideological mythology seriously, even though in moments of honesty specific individuals expressed their hatred of 'Muslims' and 'leftists'. They did not face the contradiction in their desire for a Christian Zionism which *ipso facto* is based on a form of sectarian racism. Unlike the founders of the state of Israel, they believed their own images. Israelis used theirs for popular consumption, to motivate world Jewry to support their effort.

The gamble taken by the Maronites and their supporters under the leadership of Bashir Gemayel produced a self-fulfilling prophesy. What they feared most about losing control was brought about in large measure by their attempt to take control and to set the terms of life for all others in Lebanon: the rise of a Muslim (Shia) fundamentalist movement, part of which wishes to establish an Islamic Republic in Lebanon as the way to solve their historical oppression there. The presence of Syrian troops in most of Lebanon and the Israeli 'security' area in southern Lebanon has altered the probability of there being a restored independent Lebanon in the future. In reality, Bashir Gemayel headed an effort that led to the final collapse of Lebanon, and has placed Christians in a highly vulnerable position in the Middle East. Rather than 'safeguarding' Christians and Christianity he may have exposed them to insecurity in the area.

Ironically, Maronite leadership invited the Syrians and the Israelis into Lebanon. Now a Maronite general appointed as prime minister by unsucceeded former president, Amin Gemayal, wants them to leave, especially the Syrians. The former 'saviours' are now seen as the 'spoilers'. This state of affairs was not unforeseen in Lebanon. Twenty-nine years ago, the IFRED report was commissioned by post-1958 civil war president, Fuad Shihab. Among other things the report noted:

The mutual opposition among the sects gives each of these microsocieties a feeling of invulnerability and stableness, but this is happening at the expense of a national line . . . If the current situation does not change, the disparity in the standards of living is likely to pave the way for revolution in the Lebanese regions and on the part of the underprivileged classes—revolution which would plunge the country in chaos and place it at the mercy of its neighbours' ambitions.²⁵

Although the process has been somewhat different, the consequences predicted by the report have been realised. Unfortunately, continued insistence on a confessional system after 1958 also led to the continuation of a weak state, made weaker by the heavier political load it experi-

enced in the 1960s and 1970s: the Palestinian problem and the expression of Shia discontent with their second-class status in their own country.

Postscript

The failure to elect a new president in the summer of 1988 has produced two governments in Lebanon, one in East Beirut and the other in West Beirut, representing the *de facto* partition of the country. The appointed government headed by General Aoun showed initial promise by disarming the Maronite-led militia. Such a show of impartiality was not experienced during the Gemayel presidency. Even so, his present army is comprised in great part of former Lebanese Forces, Christian militiamen. Next, General Aoun moved on Druzes-run ports, confronting them (and the Syrian occupation army allied with the Druzes and other Muslim groups) without prior attempts at discussions and negotiations. His strategy seems to have been to call US and European attention back to Lebanon's unresolved political dilemma. He immediately faced two problems: his army is too small to evict Syria from Lebanon, and there is nothing in contemporary Maronite leadership history that would convince other Lebanese that it is sincere about promoting an equitable system in Lebanon. No matter how much other Lebanese would welcome the removal of Syria (and Israel—not an Aoun priority), they are convinced neither of Aoun's capability nor of his sincerity. However well-intentioned Aoun may be, his tactics have brought greater damage and death to Lebanon. The fact that he has been receiving direct arms aid from Iraq does not bode well for his autonomy, nor for an easy solution to Syrian occupation. The presence of Israel in southern Lebanon (with a clear path to Syrian targets) adds to the difficulty.

Clearly, the Lebanese problem can only begin to be solved in the context of an international conference, preceded by the solution of the Palestinian question and aimed at setting up stages for Israeli and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The conference would also have to provide a progressive framework for re-establishing a viable Lebanese polity, one that embraces being Lebanese first and makes sectarian identity a personal matter. So long as sectarian chauvinism remains, it will reproduce reactionary impulses. The prospect for such a process to begin in the immediate future seems dim.

Notes

- ¹ J Randall, *Going All The Way: Christian warlords, Israeli adventurers, and the war in Lebanon*, New York: The Viking Press, 1983. See also, S Ziadeh and F C Hagopian (eds), 'The realignment of power in Lebanon: internal and external dimensions', special issue of the *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7(4) autumn 1985.
 - ² For example, at the October 1988 conference at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Massachusetts.
 - ³ This is particularly important given the later March 1957 agreement of President Chamoun to the Eisenhower Doctrine, which had been opposed by the Maronite Patriarch as well as those who had crafted the National Pact, and the present Israeli occupation of a 'security zone' in southern Lebanon that offers Israel an easy access corridor to Syria.
 - ⁴ See M Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp 21-2 for a discussion of the past and immediate responses to it.
 - ⁵ *Ibid.*, p 22, *Lubnan watan qawmi l'il Nasara fi al-Sharq al adua* (Lebanon is a National Home for Christians in the Middle East).
 - ⁶ *Ibid.*, p 23.
 - ⁷ M-C Aulas, 'The socio-ideological development of the Maronite community: the emergence of the Phalanges and the Lebanese Forces', in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7(4) autumn 1985, p 18.
 - ⁸ L Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism: a study based on Moshe Sharett's personal diary and other documents*, Belmont, Massachusetts: AAUG Press, third edition, 1986, pp 22-7.
 - ⁹ See K Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War*, Delmar, New York: Caravan, 1976, p 118.
 - ¹⁰ R Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Societies*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp 15, 20.
 - ¹¹ M Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p 175.
 - ¹² K Salibi, 'The Maronite Church in the Middle Ages and its union with Rome', undated mimeograph given to me by the author in Beirut in June 1983, p 5.
 - ¹³ *Ibid.*, p 7.
 - ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 16-17.
 - ¹⁵ I F Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986, pp 134-6.
 - ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 147-52.
 - ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 145-7.
 - ¹⁸ 'Les Missions des Lazaristes et des Filles de la Charité des Provinces de France', *Bulletin Mensuel*, July 1931, 'Au pays Maronite: le college francais Saint-Joseph d'Antoura', p 205.
 - ¹⁹ *Archives Diplomatiques* (French), series E-313, no 125, E-Levant, 'Letter from Nahoum Mokarzel to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 November 1919'.
 - ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 'Letter from Nahoum Mokarzel to Emir Faysal, 4 October 1919', p 44.
 - ²¹ 'Ministere des Affaires, "Etrangeres, direction des affaires politiques et commerciales, Syrie et Liban", series F-413, 2 Levant, no 498, *Politique Interne: exercice du mandai Liban, 10 Mai 1932 Jun 1933*, pp 115-7, 'Letter addressed to the Under-Secretary of State from Emile Lade', (then a Lebanese Deputy).
- J Randall, *Going All The Way*.
- A B Namaan, *Maronity: constants and variables*, Beirut: World Maronite Congress, 1980.
- Reverend Joseph Mouwanas, *La Personnalité Libanaise*, Kaslik, Lebanon: University of the Holy Spirit, 1973.
- C Malik, 'Why do you fight?', a speech delivered to a new group of Lebanese Phalangist Militia graduates, 29 August 1976, pp 5-6 of the English translation from a pamphlet in Arabic published by the University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon: F F Boustany, *Le Probleme du Liban*, Kaslik, Lebanon: University of the Holy Spirit, second edition, 1978.
- H-L Dupuy, *Le Liban: société multiconfessionnelle nature et évolution politique, économique, et sociale de ses communautés de base: essai de sociologie*, from the original manuscript published in France, 1980.
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enced in the 1960s and 1970s: the Palestinian problem and the expression of Shia discontent with their second-class status in their own country.

Postscript

The failure to elect a new president in the summer of 1988 has produced two governments in Lebanon, one in East Beirut and the other in West Beirut, representing the *de facto* partition of the country. The appointed government headed by General Aoun showed initial promise by disarming the Maronite-led militia. Such a show of impartiality was not experienced during the Gemayel presidency. Even so, his present army comprised in great part of former Lebanese Forces, Christian militia men. Next, General Aoun moved on Druzes-run ports, confronting them (and the Syrian occupation army allied with the Druzes and other Muslim groups) without prior attempts at discussions and negotiation. His strategy seems to have been to call US and European occupation back to Lebanon's unresolved political dilemma. He moved, however, faced two problems: his army is too small to evict Syria from its ports, and there is nothing in contemporary Maronite leadership that would convince other Lebanese that it is sincere about creating an equitable system in Lebanon. No matter how much the Maronites would welcome the removal of Syria (and Israel as a source of instability), they are convinced neither of Aoun's capability nor of his sincerity. However well-intentioned Aoun may be, his tactics have brought greater damage and death to Lebanon. The fact that he has been receiving direct arms aid from Iraq does not bode well for his autonomy, nor for an easy solution to Syrian occupation. The presence of Israel in southern Lebanon (with a clear path to Syrian targets) adds to the difficulty.

Clearly, the Lebanese problem can only begin to be solved in the context of an international conference, preceded by the solution of the Palestinian question and aimed at setting up stages for Israeli and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The conference would also have to provide a progressive framework for re-establishing a viable Lebanese polity, one that embraces being Lebanese first and makes sectarian identity a personal matter. So long as sectarian chauvinism remains, it will reproduce reactionary impulses. The prospect for such a process to begin in the immediate future seems dim.

Notes

- ¹ J Randall, *Going All The Way: Christian warlords, Israeli adventurers and the war in Lebanon*, New York: The Viking Press, 1983. See also, S Ziadeh and F C Hapopian (eds), 'The realignment of power in Lebanon: internal and external dimensions', special issue of the *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7(4) autumn 1985.
- ² For example, at the October 1988 conference at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Massachusetts.
- ³ This is particularly important given the later March 1957 agreement of President Chamoun to the Eisenhower Doctrine, which had been opposed by the Maronite Patriarch as well as those who had crafted the National Pact, and the present Israeli occupation of a 'security zone' in southern Lebanon that offers Israel an easy access corridor to Syria.
- ⁴ See M Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp 21-2 for a discussion of the past and immediate responses to it.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p 22, *Lubnan watan qawmi l'il Nasara fi al Sharq al adna* (Lebanon is a National Home for Christians in the Middle East).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p 23.
- ⁷ M-C Aulas, 'The socio-ideological development of the Maronite community, the emergence of the Phalanges and the Lebanese Forces', in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7(4) autumn 1985, p 18.
- ⁸ L Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism: a study based on Moshe Sharett's personal diary and other documents*, Belmont, Massachusetts: AATG Press, third edition, 1986, pp 22-7.
- ⁹ See K Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War*, Delmar, New York: Caravan, 1976, p 118.
- ¹⁰ R Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Societies*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp 15, 20.
- ¹¹ M Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p 175.
- ¹² K Salibi, 'The Maronite Church in the Middle Ages and its union with Rome', undated mimeograph given to me by the author in Beirut in June 1983, p 5.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p 7.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 16-17.
- ¹⁵ I F Harek, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986, pp 134-6.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 147-52.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 145-7.
- ¹⁸ *Les Missions des Lazaristes et des Filles de la Charité des Provinces de France*, Bulletin Mensuel, July 1931, 'Au pays Maronite: le collège français Saint-Joseph', p 215.
- ¹⁹ Archives Diplomatiques (French), series E-313, no 125, 1-1 avant, 'Letter from Nahoum Mokarzel to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 November 1919'.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 'Letter from Nahoum Mokarzel to Emir Faysal, 4 October 1919', p 44.
- ²¹ Ministère des Affaires, 'Etrangeres, direction des affaires politiques et commerciales: Syrie et Liban', series E-413, 2 Levant, no 498, *Politique Interneure: exercice du mandat Liban 10 Mai 1932 Juin 1933*, pp 115-7, 'Letter addressed to the Under-Secretary of State from Emile Edde', (then a Lebanese Deputy).
- ²² J Randall, *Going All The Way*.
- ²³ A B Namaan, *Maronity: constants and variables*, Beirut: World Maronite Congress, 1980.
- ²⁴ Reverend Joseph Mouwanes, *La Personnalité Libanaise*, Kaslik, Lebanon: University of the Holy Spirit, 1973.
- ²⁵ C Malik, 'Why do you fight?', a speech delivered to a new group of Lebanese Phalangist Militia graduates, 29 August 1976, pp 5-6 of the English translation from a pamphlet in Arabic published by the University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon. F E Boustany, *Le problème du Liban*, Kaslik, Lebanon: University of the Holy Spirit, second edition, 1978.
- ²⁶ L Dupuy, *Le Liban: société multiconfessionnelle nature et évolution politique, économique, et sociale de ses communautés de base: essai de sociologie*, from the original manuscript published in France, 1980.
- ²⁷ Quoted in 'The fulfilment of the IFRD prophecy', in *Monday Morning* (Beirut), 17-23 November 1975.

Nationalities and the state in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's first attempt to count its population was made in 1984. The results, although incomplete, indicated a total of over 42 million, several million more than previously estimated. This proved Ethiopia to be the country with the third highest population in Africa. Its composition is highly varied: more than eighty languages are spoken, each embodying a unique cultural heritage and a distinct identity. The great majority of these groups are small in size and insignificant in economic and political terms. One of the two largest groups is the Amhara, the main branch of the Abyssinian family and the traditional rulers of Ethiopia, whose historic homeland is the northern plateau. The Oromo, whose bulk reside in the south, rival the Amhara in terms of population. The Tigrinya speakers, the smaller Abyssinian branch, occupy the province of Tigray in the north and the Eritrean highland.

There are striking sociocultural differences and little intermixing between some groups, particularly the pastoralist inhabitants of the lowlands, such as the Somali and Afar, and the highland peasantry. On the other hand, in some regions there has been considerable assimilation into the dominant Amhara culture, especially among the Oromo in the central part of the country. Christianity and Islam have native roots in Ethiopia, and a history of animosity exists between their adherents. Traditional African creeds also survive. In short, in its ethnic and sociocultural composition, the Ethiopian state is typically African.

Ethiopia, however, is unique in the manner of its creation. As is well known, the founder of the present state is the Christian highland kingdom of Abyssinia, whose origins can be traced into antiquity. After centuries of medieval decline and obscurity, Abyssinia emerged as a regional power in the second half of the nineteenth century, just in time to fend off an Egyptian incursion in the north and, subsequently, to contain an Italian invasion in the same region. While Italy was able to establish control in the colony it called Eritrea, Abyssinia itself competed successfully in the imperialist scramble in the south. This feat was accomplished by Menelik, originally the ruler of the southernmost Amhara province of Shoa, and later Emperor of Ethiopia (1889-1913).

Menelik's conquests in the last quarter of the nineteenth century doubled the territory and population of his domain, henceforth officially called the Ethiopian Empire. A great variety of ethnic groups inhabited the conquered territories and, unlike Abyssinia, Ethiopia was a highly heterogeneous state.

In many instances the manner of the conquest was violent, and was followed by frequent despoilment, enslavement, and other vicissitudes that left a bitter legacy among the conquered. A vast expropriation of land (up to two-thirds) in much of the conquered territory turned many of the local peasants into tenants of landlords, who acquired land through grants from the state. The landlords were Abyssinians, mainly from Shoa, and some Oromo who served Menelik. They constituted a ruling class distinguished from the peasants not only by its economic position and political status, but also by its Christian religion, Amharigna language and Abyssinian culture. The result was a politically explosive conjunction of ethnic and class divisions. Under the circumstances, state rule could not be effectively maintained by the quasi-feudal traditional Abyssinian political system, and a process of modernisation, bureaucratisation and militarisation was carried out by Menelik's successor, Haile Selassie, who became regent in 1917, king in 1928, and emperor (king of kings) in 1930.

The imperial regime

During Haile Selassie's reign, the notion of Ethiopia as a Christian, Amharigna-speaking nation—that is, an extension of Abyssinia—was cultivated. In a speech to the United States Congress, the Emperor described it as 'A Christian island in a sea of Islam'. Appropriately, Muslims, who rivalled the Christians in population, had no role in public life. All Ethiopian languages other than Amharigna were banned from printing and broadcasting. In what became an absolute monarchy in fact as well as theory, political power was monopolised by the Emperor and was exercised at the centre through a coterie of hand-picked retainers, while the Abyssinian aristocracy continued to rule the countryside, both north and south, where more than ninety per cent of the population lived.

The renovation of the state had reached an advanced stage by the 1960s, when it faced the first challenges from dissident ethnic and regional groups. By this time, Ethiopia had a sizeable military establishment—in fact, the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. Its training,

upkeep and weaponry were provided by the USA, a power with which Ethiopia had established a close patron-client relationship. Throughout the 1960s, the Ethiopian army was kept busy suppressing rebellions that broke out in various parts of the empire. Goaded by the introduction of taxation in 1963, the Somali pastoralists in the Ogaden and Bale provinces rose spontaneously in the hope of joining their ethnic kinsmen in the adjacent independent Somali Republic. They succeeded only in provoking the first armed confrontation between Ethiopia and Somalia at the end of that year. While Somalia's backdown ended the affair in the Ogaden, the uprising spread to the Arsi (Oromo) peasantry in Bale, the victims of manifold exploitation at the hands of provincial Ethiopian officialdom. It was not until 1969 that this rebellion was ended. In the meantime, the military had to deal with an uprising in the Amhara province of Gojjam, in 1968.

The most serious challenge, of course, was posed in Eritrea. The former Italian colony passed under British military rule in 1941, and the end of World War II ushered in a period of political conflict concerning the colony's future. Ethiopia proclaimed its right to annex Eritrea and mobilised support among the Christians in that province, while also lobbying among the Great Powers, especially its future patron, the USA. Not surprisingly, Eritrean Muslims were opposed to any link with Ethiopia, and generally favoured independence. The United Nations approved a compromise solution in the form of federation, which provided Eritrea with genuine self government and the religious communities with parity in all spheres of public life.

Although formally accepted by Addis Ababa, the scheme was anathema to the Emperor, because it limited his prerogative incongruously in one corner of his domain. It was also feared that the independence movement might revive in the climate of political freedom guaranteed by the Eritrean constitution. Consequently, no sooner was the federation installed in 1952, than it became a target of subversion from Addis Ababa, and was finally dismantled altogether in 1962. That year, a small guerrilla force belonging to the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), founded in 1960, had already gathered in the lowland of western Eritrea. Understandably, the ELF was an exclusively Muslim movement at the time, and was to remain predominantly so for some years.

While it seemed possible to suppress or contain these centripetal pressures militarily, the imperial regime gave no thought to a political response. Indeed, there was little that could have been done in this respect within the confines of the absolute monarchy, where the very notion of

politics was subversive because it intruded into the royal prerogative, as the Eritreans had discovered during their brief experiment in self rule. The official image of Ethiopia as Abyssinia *writ large* ruled out the mention even of the existence of ethnic and regional differences, let alone conflicts. In fact, the long wars waged throughout the 1960s were rarely mentioned publicly, and then only as operations against bandits.

The taboo was exploded at the end of the decade by the radical student movement, which had become the regime's political nemesis. As militant Marxists, the radicals were obliged to confront the national issue and, after some agonising, opted for the Leninist principle of national self determination and declared their support for the Eritrean rebels. The regime reacted fiercely, and the first result was a massacre of students at the campus of the University of Addis Ababa, in December 1969. From then on, the national issue was forced onto the agenda of every political movement in the country.

Only the imperial regime continued to pretend that the issue did not exist, although by the early 1970s it had become a military problem as well, affecting its main pillar of support, the army. This was partly due to soldier weariness with long periods of service in remote areas, where living conditions were primitive as well as dangerous. Three of Ethiopia's four army divisions were permanently stationed in the troubled regions. In the early 1970s, the Second Division in Eritrea was suffering rising casualties, while losing control of the countryside to the nationalist rebels. Even more serious was the infection of the lower ranks with the spirit of political alienation manifested foremost in the student movement. Indeed, it was junior and noncommissioned officers who had passed through university and secondary school who led the military movement that toppled Haile Selassie from the throne in 1974.

The military regime

The military intervention turned into a veritable social revolution which ended not only Haile Selassie's long reign, but also the era of the *ancien régime*. This was the result of a mass upheaval that shook the country in 1974 and created the momentum for social as well as political change. Sparked by the exposure of the regime's culpability in the heavy toll taken by the 1973-74 famine, it snowballed as one disgruntled group after another added its grievances and demanded redress. Now formed into political factions, the radical intelligentsia set the mood and agenda for the popular movement by demanding nothing less than a new social

order. When the Dergue, a committee of representatives from various branches of the armed forces, emerged in mid-year, the radicals monitored its every move, prodding it to take drastic action against the old ruling classes. After the Dergue seized power in September 1974, the radicals then dogged its every step, demanding fundamental socioeconomic reform that would preclude a restoration of the old order. Partly out of sympathy with radical goals, but mainly in order to harness the popular movement to its rule, the Dergue obliged. A series of decrees nationalised industry, finance, plantations, agricultural land and urban real estate, dismantling the material foundations of the old order and putting most economic assets under state ownership.

The most significant of these measures was a sweeping land reform which nationalised land, limited holdings to a maximum of ten hectares, forbade the selling and renting of land and the use of hired labour, and redistributed land equally among those who tilled it. Landlordship and tenancy were eliminated overnight, and the possibility of land accumulation in the future was precluded. Apart from the revolutionary economic and social implications of the land reform, it had an immediate and highly significant political impact, because it dissolved the ethnic and class conjunction that prevailed in the southern half of the country, and forestalled the rise of ethnic and regional dissidence in an area where it was thought most likely to appear. The land reform gave the peasantry in the south a vested material interest in the Ethiopian state, as well as a political interest in the incumbent regime.

No such political acumen was evident in the Dergue's handling of the national issue, where its policies proved to be the same as those of the imperial regime, although more energetically pursued. This became immediately obvious in its handling of the Eritreans. Apparently, the option of a political approach to the nationalist fronts was never considered. The sole political gesture made by the first head of state appointed by the Dergue, General Aman Andom, was intended to outflank the liberation fronts by appealing directly to the people of Eritrea to support the regime in Addis Ababa which had overthrown their oppressors. The Eritrean rebels responded with an offensive that nearly overran the province, and the Dergue sent the first of an endless series of reinforcements to the north. General Aman, who objected to this escalation, was killed.

Since it subsequently espoused Marxism as its ideology, the new regime could not formally reject the principle of national self determination. Indeed, it was included in its Programme of the National Demo-

cratic Revolution issued in April 1975, albeit minus the crucial provision 'up to and including secession'. As explicitly proclaimed in their chosen motto 'Ethiopia First', the soldiers' primary goal was the preservation of the Ethiopian state, and they could not countenance secession. Nevertheless, advised by a faction of the radical intelligentsia known as MEISON (from the initials of its Amharic name meaning the All-Ethiopia Social Movement) the regime felt obliged to make a formal gesture to the Eritreans. In March 1976, it issued a nine-point plan offering to consider regional autonomy at some point in the future. In the meantime, it invited Eritreans to cooperate in promoting the 'unity of the oppressed classes of Ethiopia'.

By now, the composition of the nationalist movement had changed significantly through the inflow of large numbers of Eritrean Christians. The snuffing out of the political freedom enjoyed in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the proscription of their Tigrigna language in education, the heavy-handed rule of Amhara officials, and other handicaps associated with the dismantling of the federation had cooled Christian Eritrean feelings towards Ethiopia. Students were among the first to flock to the ELF, followed by workers alienated by the smashing of the fledgling Eritrean trade union movement, and the onset of economic stagnation that forced many of them to emigrate in order to find work. Ethiopian pacification efforts wreaked havoc in the countryside, and provided the nationalist movement with peasant recruits. The Christian inflow created strains that split the ELF at the turn of the decade, and gave rise to a far more radical movement, eventually to become known as the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF). Although an internecine struggle between the two rival fronts raged in the first half of the 1970s, they managed to take advantage of the political disarray in Ethiopia in the middle of the decade, and nearly succeeded in liberating the province. By the end of 1977, only four towns in Eritrea still remained in Ethiopian hands.

A more meaningful approach was adopted by the Dergue on the cultural plane, where it departed from the policy of the *ancien régime*. From the beginning, it had promised cryptically to abolish 'certain traditional customs which may hamper the unity and progress of Ethiopia'. The ban on printing and broadcasting languages other than Amharigna and English was lifted, and cultural pluralism was recognised as the Ethiopian condition. Islam was granted official standing. On the other hand, the Orthodox Church lost its lands and its state-supported status. The Amhara monopoly of high office was broken. Although its exact

ethnic composition was not known, the Dergue itself was not homogeneous, and several of its prominent members were not Amhara.

This departure complemented a trend towards economic integration that had advanced under the *ancien régime*. Capital investment, economic development, and the required infrastructure during the last two decades of imperial rule had concentrated in the industrial belt south of Addis Ababa, the coffee-producing region in the southwest, and the cotton-raising region in the east—all areas that had been incorporated into the Ethiopian state during the recent expansion. Industrial workers, commercial crop producers, traders, entrepreneurs and others involved in the modern economic sector were integrated into an economic nexus fashioned and controlled by the state. Regardless of their ethnic origin—and most of them were not Abyssinians—they increasingly identified with the state upon which their material welfare depended. This was even more so with career military men at all levels, and most recently applied to the southern peasantry, the main beneficiaries of the land reform. Thus, various ethnic groups and social classes have rallied to the defence of the state, because they identified their own interests with its preservation. They contributed heavily to the human and material resources consumed in the desperate struggle waged by the military regime since 1974, against a plethora of ethnic and regional movements intent on transforming or abandoning the state.

National movements and the left

Not surprisingly, most such movements arose in peripheral areas largely untouched by economic development and entirely neglected by the state. The potency of the material factor is highlighted in the case of Tigray, the homeland of the junior branch of the Abyssinian family, but also the poorest province of Ethiopia. A different language and historic rivalry with the Amhara preserved a virile provincial identity among the people of Tigray, who have been quick to take up arms against a central government dominated by Amhara since Menelik. Not a single sign of economic development appeared in Tigray in the postwar period to relieve the pressure of the population on a land exhausted by millennia of erosion. Tigray was the focal centre of three major famines triggered by drought in this period. The Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) was formed in the mid-1970s, and was soon challenging the regime for control of the province.

Ethnic differences, historic hostility, lack of access to the state and

material deprivation were also the seeds that gave rise to the Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF), whose constituents were the Ogaden pastoralists, the Somali and Abo Liberation Front (SALF) in Bale and Sidamo provinces, and the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), all of which emerged at the same time, when the Dergue's determination to preserve the state in the form it had inherited from Haile Selassie became clear. It was then that groups of radical intellectuals turned to ethnic and regional mobilisation as the most effective method for waging the political struggle.

The imposition of military rule was the cause of the first split in the thin and fractious ranks of the Ethiopian left. While one faction, MEISON, chose to work with the Dergue in the hope of becoming its political mentor, another faction, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP), declared war against the regime and its radical allies. Both factions accepted the right of nations to self-determination, but both were loath to see the class struggle weakened by the proliferation of dissident nationalist movements. Hoping that even Eritrea could be brought into the Ethiopian fold once the class struggle was won, they were less than categorical in their acceptance of Eritrea's right to independence. This ensured that their relationship with the emerging ethnic and regional movements, whose leadership came from the same ranks of the radical intelligentsia, was destined to be hostile. In the case of MEISON this was unavoidable from the start, since this group was obliged to accommodate itself to the Dergue's position. The EPRP was initially helped by the EPLF to set up a guerrilla base in Tigray province. Their relationship soured when the former refused to accept that Eritrea was an Ethiopian colony, a thesis implying that nothing less than separation was possible.

In the meantime, the EPRP and TPLF confronted one another in Tigray. The former upheld the primacy of the class struggle and claimed the right to operate throughout Ethiopia, while the latter insisted the national struggle had priority at that stage, and would not tolerate rivals in its home province. The matter was finally settled with arms, and the defeated EPRP force was expelled from Tigray. The emergence of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was another cause for strain and hostility. Keenly aware of the potential political weight of the Oromo, both MEISON and EPRP established front organisations designed to harness Oromo nationalist sentiment to the class struggle, and neither welcomed the appearance of a separatist Oromo movement. Likewise, the radicals had no regard for the WSLF and SALF which were under the

thumb of the military regime in Somalia, or the ALF whose patron was Ali Mira, the Afar sultan and former cotton magnate. When the Somali army invaded the Ogaden in mid-1977, the EPRP condemned both the invasion and the Dergue's attempts to resist it—a confused and politically damaging stand. MEISON judged the same time opportune to make a grab for power and was purged.

Stalemate

The national issue thus proved to be the second cause of multiple fracture within the left, and sealed its defeat and destruction. This had been largely accomplished by mid-1978, and the regime could now concentrate on resolving the national issue by force. The military establishment expanded fivefold, making it the largest in the continent and the most heavily armed, with Soviet weaponry. Initially, the peasant associations were used to conscribe manpower, but compulsory military service was introduced in 1983. The country's resources were commandeered in an all-out effort, symbolised in patriotic slogans such as 'Everything for the Motherland', 'Unity or Death', and 'Everything for the War Front'. Ideological justification was provided by claiming that since the Eritreans were opposing a revolutionary socialist regime in Addis Ababa they were objectively siding with reaction and counter-revolution. Successive major campaigns were launched, involving as many as 100,000 men, and combining land, air and sea operations of a type not seen in Africa before. Casualties each time were counted in thousands and tens of thousands.

With massive Soviet material support and Cuban combat assistance, the Somali invading force was expelled in early 1978. The main thrust of the military effort was then switched to Eritrea. The first offensive, in mid-1978, succeeded in recapturing the towns and pushed the rebels to the northern tip of the plateau and the western lowland, where the battle lines were to remain for several years. The regime in Addis Ababa reasoned that if the Eritrean rebels were defeated, all other challenges to the state would collapse. This was thought to be particularly true of the TPLF in Tigray, whose growth owed not a little to EPLF support. Hence, the Dergue was content to hold on to the main towns in Tigray and keep open the main road to Eritrea. The risk involved in this strategy was that the Tigray rebels would take advantage of the lower priority assigned to them to consolidate their hold in the countryside and prepare themselves for major operations—which is what they did. The

TPLF also sponsored another armed movement, the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Movement (EPDM), whose sphere of operations was in the adjacent districts of Wollo and Begemdir provinces. The EPDM was formed from remnants of the EPRP, a movement kept alive by other survivors who established an armed presence in western Gojjam province. Mutually hostile, these two groups constituted the only opposition to the regime not influenced by ethnic or regional considerations.

After the defeat of the Somali army, the Dergue had little difficulty re-establishing state control in areas contested by the WSLF and SALT. This was partly due to the accommodating attitude of the regime in Mogadishu which, menaced by proliferating domestic opposition, did not wish to provoke Addis Ababa. Therefore, it obstructed attempts by these movements to resume operations inside Ethiopia. However, given a chance to turn the tables on its enemy, Addis Ababa did not hesitate. In the early 1980s, two Somali opposition movements based in Ethiopia and armed by the Dergue began attacking targets inside Somalia with the aim of overthrowing Siad Barre.

The OLF, whose potential constituency was the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, did not live up to its promise. The scope of the process of economic integration under the imperial regime, noted above, covered mainly Oromo areas and limited its appeal to urban groups there. Likewise, the land reform later undermined its appeal among the peasantry. After trying for some years to establish a base in the mountainous Chercher area in Hararge province, the OLF shifted its attention to the west, and moved into the lowland fringe of Wallega province, where it posed no real threat.

Sustained military effort failed to eliminate the threat in the north. However, it succeeded in stalling the economy and creating scarcity, inflation, unemployment and mounting debt. The war consumed most available resources, leaving little for development. In the first decade of military rule, production grew at an average of 2.5 per cent annually, falling behind a rate of population growth now estimated at 2.9 per cent. External debt at the end of 1985 rose to nearly 60 per cent of GDP, and the debt service ratio stood at 27.3 per cent. Buoyant coffee prices, Ethiopia's main export, staved off bankruptcy.

Prices skyrocketed, and in order to feed its armies and the urban population, the regime had to squeeze the peasantry through a system of compulsory purchasing of grain at prices fixed by the state. As in the case of securing manpower for the military, the peasant associations

were used to operate this system. Thus, what were conceived initially as the means of peasant emancipation were turned into instruments of state control. Compulsory purchase proved a disincentive that depressed agricultural production, and contributed to a serious problem of food insufficiency even before drought returned in the early 1980s. This visitation set off a famine far worse than the one that preceded the collapse of the imperial regime. It claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, and made Ethiopia the ward of international charity.

The Dergue let international organisations look after the victims, while it busied itself setting up a political front, the Working Peoples Party of Ethiopia, and also persisted in its efforts to crush the rebels in the north. Continuous failure, however, sapped Ethiopian morale, and the rebels in Eritrea and Tigray were able to go on the offensive. In 1988 they moved against the towns, which fell one after another, often without a fight. Within a few months, the Ethiopians in Eritrea were besieged in the main cities of Asmara, Keren, the port of Massawa, and a couple of lesser towns on the border with Tigray. In the latter province, they were pushed steadily southwards, and when Makale, the provincial capital, fell in March 1989, they were left holding only a mountain fortress at Maichew. The loss of Tigray closed the land route to Eritrea, and rendered the Ethiopian position in the latter region untenable in the long term.

The scale of the defeat could not be concealed. The regime declared a state of national emergency, expelled all foreign aid workers from the north, and proceeded to bomb the rebel-held towns. A hastily arranged reconciliation with a similarly imperiled regime in Somalia enabled Ethiopia to transfer troops from the Ogaden to Eritrea. For the first time, Mengistu Haile Mariam, the regime's leader, acknowledged the mortal threat posed by those he called 'terrorists', and wondered why they rejected the 'peace offer' made to them in the Constitution of the Peoples Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, adopted in 1987. This had long been mooted as the definitive political solution to the national issue in Ethiopia. A Nationalities Institute was founded in 1983 for the purpose of studying the ethnic composition of the country, in preparation for a constitutional design embodying regional self government. Article Two of the Constitution proclaimed Ethiopia a unitary state which shall ensure the equality of nationalities and the realisation of regional autonomy.

A plan was subsequently drawn up rearranging the administrative map of the state into twenty-four administrative and five autonomous

regions. A diluted variation of the Soviet model, it provides for varying degrees of regional self government to be exercised with the consent of the central government and under the supervision of the Workers Party of Ethiopia. The greatest degree of autonomy is granted to the autonomous province of Eritrea, which is subdivided into three administrative regions roughly corresponding to the main ethnic clusters in that area. Eritrea is to lose the entire coastal Danakil region and the port of Assab, now included in a new Assab administrative region which embraces the Afar region. Tigray, another autonomous region, also loses its entire eastern lowland to Assab. The southern half of the Ogaden and Bale are joined in the Ogaden autonomous province, while the northernmost Somali group, the Issa, are grouped into the small Dire Dawa autonomous region bordering Djibouti, where the rest of the Issa live. The scheme is remarkable for the range of possibilities it offers to foster rivalries among ethnic groups and thereby dilute regional solidarity.

Conclusion

By now, it has become obvious that a military solution is not a realistic option for resolving Ethiopia's manifold national conflict. Thanks to the intervention of foreign interests, the armed conflict lasted much longer, and was fought on a much higher technological level, than the country's resources could allow. In view of recent developments in international relations, and the impetus towards resolution of regional conflicts, it is unlikely that Ethiopia will continue to obtain massive supplies of modern weaponry cheaply. Far less dependent on external support and sophisticated weaponry, the guerrillas are not similarly constrained. Sooner or later, willingly or not, the state will have to come to political terms with its opponents. This is not likely to happen under the present regime, whose every effort has been designed to give the state a totalitarian form, and whose credibility has collapsed along with the war effort. A decisive change at the centre that would allow consideration of negotiated settlement is a prerequisite to any solution.

Such a settlement would have to address the root cause of the conflict, which is the problem of managing and distributing equitably social and economic resources that have always been scarce. Resource management is the function of the state, and the pattern of distribution among regions, ethnic groups and social classes is basically determined by their access to the state. In Ethiopia, such access was unequal in the past and

remains so now, and the material result has been great disparity in the distribution of resources. In a pattern that is common to Africa, such disparity coincides with ethnic and regional divisions, which lend themselves for the purpose of political mobilisation. The political result has been a series of upheavals, the most dramatic being the 1974 revolution, the product of combined class, ethnic and regional contradictions. The upheavals continue in the form of the various dissident movements, which are essentially fighting for greater access to state power in order to change the existing pattern of resource allocation.

It follows that the essence of a settlement will concern the form of the state, which is highly centralised and rigidly authoritarian. It was the Dergue's determination to preserve this form that provoked such varied and determined opposition. Decentralisation affording genuine self government to ethnic and regional groups is the essential condition for settlement of the conflict. In the recently adopted constitution, the regime sought to address precisely this point, but much too late to be taken seriously.

Forging a nation: the Eritrean experience

Any discussion of the national question and ethnicity in the Horn of Africa is especially fraught, for the words used to talk about them are precisely what people are fighting about.¹ Are the Tigray or Oromo peoples 'nations' deserving self-determination, or merely 'nationalities', part of a greater Ethiopia? There has, of course, been an Ethiopian state for some centuries, but it only came to occupy its present boundaries in the late nineteenth century, essentially by conquest. Past incorporations also, as Clapham reminds us, involved some process of assimilation,² but that process is now being resisted by the majority within some of the nationalities (see the article by John Markakis in this issue).³ In fact, though the present Ethiopian regime and the Eritrean liberation movement employ similar language, preferring to talk about 'nationalities' (rather than the practice common elsewhere in Africa of referring to 'tribes' or 'ethnic groups') they differ in that the latter reject the inclusion of the nationalities that are found in Eritrea within the Ethiopian nation.

One of the two largest Eritrean nationalities is the Tigrinya, who occupy the tongue of the Abyssinian highlands that extend north from the Tigray province of Ethiopia across Eritrea's southern border. They have historically been on the receiving end of Abyssinian attempts at political assimilation – sometimes accepting ties, sometimes in conflict. They share the same Coptic Christian religion and other cultural links with the Tigray and other highland Ethiopian nationalities. However, Eritrea's difference lies in the fact that none of the other eight nationalities now recognised in Eritrea had ever been subject to Ethiopian over-rule before the 'disposal' of the former Italian colony by the UN in 1952. Moreover, the peoples of the extensive lowlands in the west of the country, the coastal plains and the northern hills have a vastly different way of life and culture from the highland Ethiopians; their paths have rarely crossed during recorded history. Eritrea's difference from Ethiopia proper also lies in the fact that the rest of the people in the territory had never been subject to Ethiopian over-rule before 1952. The people of the extensive lowlands in the north of the country and of the northern hills have a different way of life and culture to the

Ethiopian highlanders; their histories have rarely impinged upon each other. My concern is not with the legal basis of Eritrea's claim to separate existence, but how an Eritrean nationalism has emerged amongst this heterogeneous population in unpropitious circumstances.

The ethnic composition of Eritrea and its 'nationalities'

At present, the Eritrean nationalists themselves recognise nine nationalities. This particular classification is somewhat arbitrary in the way that it amalgamates some groups that might be considered separate—but the ethnic situation, as elsewhere in Africa, is complex and fluid enough for arbitrariness to occur with any classification.

If the total Eritrean population is three million (nobody knows precisely) the Tigrinya speakers would number well over one million. They occupy three small, but densely populated provinces in the south-centre (Akele Guzai, Sera and Hamasien). They represent a group that share some common political history, is predominantly Coptic Christian (few Muslims live peaceably there) and shares a sedentary agricultural way of life based on ox-plough cultivation. In this respect they share the same 'nationality' as the predominant population of the nearby, rebellious Ethiopian province of Tigray. They have a further advantage in the present context in that theirs is a written language, and they have many educated and trained people.

A lot of media discussion about the ethnic and nationality issue in Eritrea presents it as a simple dichotomy between the highland, Tigrinya-speaking, largely Christian agriculturalists, and the lowlanders who are portrayed as Islamic nomads and often labelled 'Tigre'. Indeed, this perception was no doubt behind British proposals in the late 1940s to partition the country between Sudan and Ethiopia. This notion is also reflected in the recent Ethiopian constitutional arrangements that have divided Eritrea administratively.

The realities are of course much more complex than this dichotomous categorisation suggests. For a start, the 'nationality' that the Eritrean liberation movement refers to as 'Tigre' does correspond to a group of whom most (but not all) speak a common language and almost all are Muslim, but in other respects it is a more disparate grouping with no history of political unity. In earlier times some elements of this Tigre category were referred to by their separate names. The Beni Amer, for instance, are a people numbering perhaps 250,000 divided between Sudan and the northern tip of Eritrea and Barka, the western province

of Eritrea. They are now referred to as merely a 'tribe'—although not all the eighteen or so 'sections' of this segmented group do in fact speak Tigre. Moreover, a few of them are nomadic pastoralists, most do practise some cultivation as well as livestock husbandry, and a significant number are sedentary. Other tribes amongst the Tigre speakers are the Haddab of the northernmost province of Sahel, and the Maria of Senhit province, north of Asmara. The picture is further confused by the word Tigre, which as well as the language, also refers to the predominant but exploited class of serfs that were dominated by the aristocracy (*nabtab*) found amongst these groups. More will be said below about the confluence of ethnicity and class.

The minority nationalities are extraordinarily variegated.⁴ None of these groups number over 100,000; apart from the Afar none have traditions of very centralised authority, and they have no tradition of acting in concert. Moreover, objective distinctions between them often become blurred: groups among the Saho also speak Tigre, others Tigrinya, for instance.

Politics and ethnicity in the development of the nationalist movement

The 'givens' of cultural homogeneity and common history do not pre-determine the way that ethnic groups participate politically, how they define and redefine their collective consciousness in the process, or even which particular amalgams act together as an ethnic group. As Kasfir has remarked, an 'ethnic category does not automatically become an ethnic group'.⁵ Indeed, in the convoluted history of modern politics in Eritrea, the stance of some 'nationalities' has fluctuated. In particular, many Tigrinya certainly gave support in the late 1940s to the prospect of union with Ethiopia, whereas many have been found in the vanguard of opposition to Ethiopian direct over-rule since the 1970s.

Another crucially determining characteristic of the national politics of the last forty years has been the chronic divisions, often involving complex alliances, but still essentially regional and ethnic. But whereas several other countries in Africa, like Zimbabwe, found that realignments resulting from internal conflicts and defections within the struggle led to a more clear-cut polarisation of ethnic popular support and cadre recruitment by contending movements, the trend in Eritrea in the 1980s has been in the opposite direction. Out of a pattern where the liberation movement fought in a very fragmented regional way (which fuelled

serious conflicts between contending fronts in the 1960s and 1970s) different nationalities and groups have come together, and a more markedly Eritrean national consciousness has emerged to an extent that was not known until the mid-1970s.

Popular political movements sprang up in Eritrea long before they did in Ethiopia. In the 1940s, when British administration ended, different organisations concerned with the country's future emerged. A unionist movement promoting fusion with Ethiopia was founded in 1942, becoming a political party in 1946. It did get significant support especially from the Tigrinya people. In 1948 the British administration reported the 'soundings' they had taken from some 3,000 elders chosen (although exactly how is not clear) by their people. Of these, support for the Unionists was 44.8 per cent. In the first (and last) elections to the Eritrean Assembly under the UN-approved federation with Ethiopia in 1952, the unionists won 32 seats out of 68—all in the highlands—although the exact proportion of seats may be more symptomatic of constituency boundary drawing.⁶

To put this support in perspective, it was generated and delivered by the consistent and utmost use of the powers of the Ethiopian state—funds, terror, political assassination, clientelism—and of the Orthodox Church which, enlivened by the prospect of the return of land it had lost under the Italian colonial rule, used its pulpits and threats of excommunication to support the cause. Moreover, although feudal landowning relations never completely predominated in highland society, the unionist cause received heavy backing from remaining landlord elements—of significance as land reform in the 1970s was accompanied by an espousing of the Eritrean independence cause by the highland population. Thus British Intelligence reported in 1943 that 'the real irredentism is being propagated by a minority of ecclesiasts, bureaucrats and agents'.⁷ It should also be stressed that there were always key Tigrinya figures like Woldeab Wolde Mariam, who took a pro-Independence stance. There was also an Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) formed in the 1950s that deliberately brought together Muslims and Christians in a clandestine cell-based organisation;⁸ there has always been a counter-tradition of non-sectarian politics within Eritrean nationalism.

The Independence Bloc was a short-lived coalition of three parties. The Muslim League formed in 1946 prominently involved leaders from the Beni Amer, plus some of the small Tigre groups from the Sahil and Keren areas, the Saho and Muslims from the highlands. It was rated as

having 40.5 per cent of the support in the 1948 soundings, but had split by the time federation was proposed. Having split away, the western Muslims (mainly Beni Amer) gained fifteen of the sixty-eight seats in the 1952 elections, but then reached some compromise with the unionists—chiefly as a defensive mechanism against the British proposals for partition which would have pitched them in with their long-standing rivals just across the Sudan border, the Hadendowa. Other elements of the Independence Bloc were seduced by the notion of a continued Italian Trusteeship, at least for a decade, and the blandishments of the remaining Italian settlers (once numbering 60,000). These pro-Italy elements regrouped with those eastern Muslims, and a few Christian and other nationalists who remained loyal to the idea of independence, the 'Liberal Progressives', to form the Democratic Bloc, which won eighteen seats in the 1952 elections. Thus, with three independents, those not committed to union slightly outnumbered the unionists—although the Muslim League of Western Province gave its approval to the federal act and joined the government.

Ethnicity and national groups in the liberation struggle

This pattern of the main opposition to Ethiopian over-rule coming from the Muslim communities and of the latter being divided by ethnic factionalism also characterised subsequent stages of the Eritrean liberation struggle. The first overt opposition to Ethiopia's growing encroachment on the Federation manifested itself in the ELM's urban cells, which promoted major demonstrations and strikes in 1958 (they were quelled with great ruthlessness). Since then, large numbers of Eritrean workers have migrated to find work in the Middle East, Sudan and in the West, from where they have continued to provide massive material support for the independence movement. This repression also convinced the elites that some form of armed struggle was necessary. They formed the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) under the chairmanship of the former leader of the Independence Bloc, Idris Muhammed Adam, a Beni Amer from the west (where the first armed hit and run attacks on isolated Ethiopian garrisons began in 1961). These spread to other parts of northern and eastern Eritrea. The ELF's form of organisation, into four autonomous zones (a smaller fifth one emerged belatedly in the highlands in the late 1960s) each under a local commander who in turn drew recruits from the area, reinforced the centrifugal tendencies within the Eritrean nationalist movement. Until the 1970s there was no elected

leadership; the small group of self-chosen leaders spent most of their time outside the country and used the resources they could lay hands on to reinforce 'their' zone. There was no central recruitment or training, no common strategy—the zones acted like 'competing fiefs controlled by rival ethnic groups'.⁹ The ongoing rivalry between the zones and amongst the leaders was interspersed with bouts of open conflict and by a general mistrust of would-be recruits from the highlands who were seen as pro-Ethiopian.

From the late 1960s there were in fact growing numbers of such Tigrinya volunteers, prompted by the radicalisation that began to infect students throughout Ethiopia, by the indiscriminate repression visited upon Eritrean people in all areas as part of the Ethiopian response to the guerrillas' spectacular coups, and by the ever-diminishing say that even unionist Eritreans had in the government either in Addis or Asmara. The counter-insurgency measures included mass detentions—3,000 civilian political prisoners by 1963—reprisals and atrocities against villagers and nomads, on-the-spot fines and punishments, and other martial law provisions. Just as alienating was a process of enforced assimilation and repression of culture by the centre. Most notable was enforced adoption of Amharic, not the indigenous language of any Eritreans, as the official language. The schools in Eritrea, which were more numerous than in Ethiopia proper, were forced to do away with instruction of Tigrinya, Tigre and other indigenous languages. One of today's liberation fighters graphically described to me the effect on him (as a secondary school student in the 1960s) of the day they came to burn school books in his indigenous language. The application of this enforced integration and the repression were, of course, counter-productive and 'served to dissipate much of the support the Ethiopian regime still enjoyed in Eritrea'.¹⁰ We can thus say that the growth of a genuine pan-Eritrea national consciousness which began to emerge more clearly and to be shared by the Christian population in the 1970s had as one of its preconditions the failure of Ethiopian policy to build an alternative national consciousness (a project that was not inevitably doomed from the outset, given the divided and weak nature of Eritrean nationalism in the early 1950s).

The flooding of young radicalised Christian students to try to join the struggle and the alienation of Tigrinya peasants and workers by Ethiopian repression did not, however, mean that they were easily absorbed into the mainstream of the still-predominantly Muslim ELF. At first many of the would-be young fighters were rejected by the ELF

or treated with suspicion. In one or two notorious incidents they were killed as 'traitors'. The fifth zone, covering the whole of the highlands and about half of the total population, was an afterthought and was given few resources and little political weight in leading circles. The building of a base there made little headway until the mid-1970s. As more and more young Tigrinya did gradually manage to enter the fray they began to voice criticisms of the ELF's sectarianism and lack of *organisation*. Thus the process of integrating culturally distinct fighters from the Christian highlanders into a formerly Muslim, Tigre-dominated front was interconnected with ideological in-fighting within the national liberation movements. Moreover, demands that political control should be in the hands of the fighters, for a unitary structure and coherent military strategy, and for a political programme that built links between the fighters and the people, were not confined to the new student recruits from the highlanders; they were voiced by other seasoned fighters.

Their critique led to another decade of conflict. Various reform and/or dissident groups emerged in the early 1970s from within the ELF, finally leading to break-aways and shifting tactical alliances between these dissident groups (by no means all of them were radical or Christian). The latter did eventually crystallise (from 1974 onwards) in the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which espoused a more clear-cut 'national democratic' programme, a more coherent and centralised structure. Although the pattern of conflicts and defections had ensured that a majority of its cadres were Tigrinya, it presented a balance between the nationalities and religious groups in its leadership. Meanwhile the ELF had undergone partial reform, at least in terms of its stated programme, but although it remained the larger body its political character thereafter was mixed and its tactics equivocal. It did eliminate some small dissident groups, but when it tried to do so in 1972, to the body that was to emerge as EPLF, over two years of 'civil war' ensued. This finally convinced the ELF that it could not simply eliminate the opposition by military means.

A truce was imposed by popular will in 1974. A pitched battle between detachments from the two fronts (a few miles from Asmara) was halted when thousands of people assembled from the city and nearby rural areas, calling for an end to the internecine bloodshed. The truce remained uneasy throughout the mid-1970s, even though the revolution and internal confusion weakened Ethiopia's military hold on Eritrea and enabled both fronts to make considerable gains. Between them, the

ELF and EPLF were able to drive Ethiopian garrisons from all but one town. By 1977 only the capital city and the port of Massawa remained under Ethiopian control. Virtually all rural areas had been abandoned by the Ethiopian military, thus enabling greater interaction between fighters and peasants, especially—and for almost the first time—in the highlands.

The EPLF was able to make decisive use of this opening up of the highlands. The existence of an alternative, not-exclusively Muslim, wing of the nationalist movement had already meant by the mid-1970s that for the Tigrinya (already alienated from what had become an Ethiopian army of occupation) the last impediment to their identifying with Eritrean nationalism had been removed. But it was the programme of land reform carried out in the late 1970s that gave the majority of them further impetus to commit themselves to what was becoming a revolution as well as a liberation struggle.

The highlands had become densely populated, in part through the return of the jobless when the war boom burst in the 1940s, by immigration from Tigray and other areas of Ethiopia as well as by natural increase. Land pressure together with the commercialisation of agricultural production had fostered an erosion in the traditional patterns of land tenure. These included both pre-existing and Italian-instigated landlordism (which were if anything reinforced), but the more common pattern involved the elders of an *enda* (clan) periodically redistributing land to families on the basis of need. This reallocation had been gradually discontinued as land was more permanently cultivated, leaving poorer families and the many immigrants landless or with holdings too small for survival. The EPLF land reform met their needs by reintroducing the familiar system of land redistribution in a modified form: land was in the hands not of the elders but of democratically elected People's Assemblies (PA) in the villages. The PA's membership proportionately represented the different social groups of rich, middle and poor peasants, women, traders and professionals, thus embodying social transformation, but one not so alienatingly different from 'tradition'.

The success of incorporating the highland peasants (as supporters) and their youth (as fighters) into the national struggle transformed the composition of both fronts. The EPLF became the largest and dominant force. By 1983, it was the only one which had any effective political or military presence inside Eritrea. The predominance of the EPLF, the central involvement of the Tigrinya people and the new approaches to tackling ethnic unity, however, did not emerge without further conflict

between the two fronts. In fact they both suffered very serious reverses during 1978–79, when a revitalised Ethiopian army, supplied and generalised by the USSR, turned from its successful repulsion of the Somali invasion to lift the sieges of Asmara and Massawa. Gradually it retook all the towns, roads and strategic centres of Eritrea. While retaining significant guerrilla potential, the fronts had to retreat and regroup in remote base areas. The ELF retreated to their lowland fastnesses of Barka, much of which has been virtually free of Ethiopian presence for twenty-five years. They also went to the eastern coastal areas, which in turn necessitated the difficult negotiation of a communication corridor between these two zones. The EPLF withdrew into the arid and dissected highlands and ravines of the northern province of Sahel, which offered a back-door supply route to Sudan and the Red Sea and much more defensible terrain. They were, in fact, able to defend a frontline by entrenchment and conventional military means, protecting a sizeable though barren base area. The EPLF's capability of resisting a massive Ethiopian military machine during the past ten years of stalemate is what has exhausted the Ethiopian army and finally led to sporadic EPLF breakouts since 1985. Major victories in April 1988 set the scene of desperation which led to the Ethiopian military's coup attempts in May 1989. Before this latest stage was reached, a new 'civil war' broke out between the ELF and the EPLF in 1980–82 as they retreated across each other's path and when (it seems) the ELF attacked, so that the EPLF also feared for its back. This proved decisive: the ELF, already more susceptible to and suffering heavier defeats at the hands of the Ethiopians, eventually lost its bases even in Barka and withdrew into Sudan, to split eventually into several factions.¹¹

One of these groups, calling itself the ELF-Central Command (made up mainly of rank and file fighters who rejected the 'old guard' leaders) did resume fighting and after two years of dialogue finally merged with the EPLF at a joint congress in March 1987. The rest of the ELF factions have some presence in exile circles and are available for diplomatic manipulation by such governments as that of Saudi Arabia which are opposed to the EPLF. In recent months, as internal and international pressure mounts on the Ethiopian regime to seek political solutions to the war, some of these exile factions have been involved in 'consultations' with Addis Ababa. In terms of negotiations for peace they are irrelevant, and it is too late for them to be made into a 'third force' between the EPLF and the Ethiopians. Whether they have some long-term mischief potential for once again stirring up ethnic-religious differences inside some Eritrean body politic will be considered below.

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FORGING A NATION: THE ERITREAN EXPERIENCE

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Approaches of the EPLF to the national and ethnic questions

The end of the civil war and the increasing strength of the EPLF *vis-à-vis* the Ethiopian army both posed problems and presented new opportunities for the EPLF. They had to absorb a flood of new recruits into their own ranks, seasoned fighters from the ELF and enthusiastic young volunteers and draft-avoiders from Ethiopian-occupied areas, especially the towns and including the highlands. They also needed to build a popular base in the mainly Tigre-speaking areas which were under their control in the Sahel, in neighbouring areas of Senhit province and in the vast Barka plains which had been ELF territory for twenty years.

By 1980, the emergence of the EPLF represented a victory against the exclusion of the Christians from the struggle; the arguments about exclusivity—that the Eritrean struggle was part of the Arab cause, that Arabic should be the official language of the ELF—had been rejected, even within the ELF. The EPLF then had to convince Muslims and members of non-Tigrinya nationalities that they were not to be as exclusive in reverse. The Tigrinya cadres who preponderated in the EPLF were aware of the problem: a member of the seven-person Political Bureau and head of political education, Haile Woldensi, suggested to me some years ago that one great danger they had to avoid was 'Tigrinya chauvinism'. They were thus concerned that a balance be seen in the top echelons. It might be for this reason that Isayas Afeworki, the present secretary-general and long the real power in the organisation, took the post of deputy, leaving his comrade-in-arms Mohamed Ramadhan Nur as the secretary-general until 1987. Equally, there was balance between Christian and Muslim names in those selected to the Political Bureau and the Central Committee, and also in the composition of fighting units and in the various 'departments' of the EPLF administration. The second congress of the EPLF was an important symbol of the emerging unity. It was in fact called the Unity Conference, and not only because it signalled the merger with ELF CC. Leading figures of all nationalities were presented to the conference. One of the biggest receptions was given by the 1500 delegates of the congress to an Islamic sheikh and to an abbé of the Coptic Church. Both preached unity.

The forging of unity had to overcome some immediate and practical problems. Both Muslims and Coptic Christians in the Horn are forbidden by their religions from eating food cooked by a member of the other religion. Cadres had to be coaxed out of such prejudices, but

equally the simple act of common eating was a continual reaffirmation of unity. Likewise, to avoid choosing Friday or Sunday as the Sabbath, Wednesday was adopted as the common holiday in the working week. A more intractable and major practical problem is that of language. There had to be a language of communication within the front, and Tigrinya is the only indigenous written language, that not only has literature, but such things as a typewriter keyboard. However, its central role could be contentious. It is emphasised to cadres that language is simply a means of communication. Arabic, with which most Muslims have some familiarity and which was used as an official *lingua franca* by the ELF, is no longer used for day-to-day work within the EPLF as it does not help in communicating with ordinary people. However, it has been retained for some purposes as a kind of second official language. The problem is made more intractable as Tigrinya, like Amharic, is written in the Gerz script and only the few Christians among the Tigre speakers use this script. Tigre was written in the Arabic script and others that were not formerly written, like Baza, have been set down in Latin script. Some EPLF leaders want to see all languages transposed into Latin scripts to make mutual study (and wider public accessibility of languages) possible. At the Second Congress in 1987 some major statements were in fact presented in Arabic. In communication with the ordinary people—for instance on the EPLF radio and the schools—all the other languages are used, however. Success in gradually winning over former ELF cadres was evidenced by the long, patient negotiations which finally convinced the ELF-CC faction to merge completely with the EPLF.

Political participation and building ethnic unity

A careful, stage-by-stage approach has characterised the second unity task, of building up links between the EPLF and the people of the northern and western provinces in the 1980s. Unlike the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) when it attempted to mobilise in the Ndebele minority ethnic area in the last stages of the war of liberation, the EPLF did not immediately engage in political sloganising. Nor did it simply attack the opposition movement head on; it did not use enforcement.¹² Instead, the initial contact with a locality was often made by 'cultural groups' putting on shows of songs and dances. Invariably these would include traditional music from all Eritrean nationalities, especially the local one, with some more modern 'political' songs. These cultural

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the southern states (about 19 per cent).⁸ The least contacted and assimilated are the forest Indians, probably numbering about 100,000.

Diversified and split into many relatively small groups, the 225 Indian nations speak over 170 known languages from 24 linguistic families.⁹ They have wide variations in culture and social organisation: many of the smaller groups of Indians preserve their isolation even from other Indian groups. The fourteen groups living in the famous Xingu National Park, for example, have only gathered into such close contact to escape the pressures of encircling squatters, large landowners, and government roads and development schemes.

The Yanomami have traditionally lived in about 320 small, widely scattered villages, largely made up of extended family groups.¹⁰ A large indigenous nation, probably the most numerous in Brazil, of some 10,000 Indians extends into Venezuela, where a further 13,000 live. They only came into close contact with non-Indians in 1974.¹¹ Others, such as the Pataxó Hãhãhãe in Bahia, have been under pressure from non-Indians over their land rights since at least the 1920s.¹²

In the first half of this century, 87 distinct Indian groups were wiped out—37.8 per cent of the total—but now, more than ever before, the Indian communities are threatened by the process of change which occupies their lands, removes the forest and takes over the area which is the source of their livelihood and culture. They are abruptly exposed to the forms, pressures and infections (in every sense) of modern civilisation.¹³ Until recently, the Indians seemed to be the hapless victims of this process, unable to offer any united response, politically powerless, and dependent for protection on concerned individuals. The experience of the recent Constituent Assembly and the new Constitution suggests that this situation may be changing, though perhaps too late.

Even after the inauguration of Brasília in 1960, over 70 per cent of Brazilians lived within two hundred miles of the coast. Looking outwards (mainly towards Europe) rather than to the interior, they were profoundly ignorant of the rest of their country and its people. They knew little and cared even less about the Indian population—a situation which has changed hardly at all.

During the colonial period, the overall policy was one of extermination or of containment in Church settlements. Under Pombal (prime minister of the Portuguese empire from 1755–77) there was a move, in theory at least, towards assimilation. This was continued after Independence in 1822, when José Bonifácio argued for the 'civilisation' of Indians. Slavery of Indians was abolished and they were placed as

'orphans', in itself a significant term, under the care of the central government.

With the founding of the Republic in 1889, just one year after the end of slavery, there was some reaction against the idea of assimilation and responsibility was handed over to individual states. Already there was a growing awareness of the nature and problems of the interior of Brazil—largely influenced by the brilliant novel about a north-eastern uprising by Euclides da Cunha (*Os Sertões*, 'Rebellion in the Backlands'),¹⁴ and the romantic, Indianist novels of José de Alencar (1829–77).¹⁵ Indians were entering the national consciousness, if not yet the national conscience, albeit through a romantic, literary filter.

At the same time, there were serious efforts to open up and develop the interior of Brazil and to develop indigenous policy, which sprang largely from officers in the federal army. Many of them were influenced by a selective reading of Comtean positivism, and had far greater knowledge of the Indians and the interior than civilian politicians. In 1910, the Indian Protection Service (SPI) was set up (under Decree 8.072) to protect the Indians, preserve their culture and guarantee their lands on behalf of the federal government. The SPI was founded on the inspiring work of Colonel (later Marshal) Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon who, as head of the Brazilian Telegraph Service, worked for twenty-five years on military and scientific expeditions in the interior of Brazil. Rondon, himself influenced by positivism, was appointed the first director of the SPI. In the first twenty years of its existence the SPI worked with the motto 'Die if necessary, but kill never', and established sixty-seven Indian posts without a single Indian being killed or wounded by SPI agents.¹⁶ By 1916, the Brazilian Civil Code declared forest-dwelling Indians to be only 'relatively incapable', giving them the status of minors between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one.

The assimilation of Indians continued as a principal theme of government legislation, but was often subordinated to other, national interests. For example, in 1934 the SPI was placed (by Decree 24.700) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War. The aim was to integrate the Indians living in frontier areas into Brazilian society, to preserve the international boundaries, before both the border areas and their population be lost to another country. Similarly, in 1959 (under Decree 1.736) the SPI was put under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, in order to encourage the Indians to become farmers and to promote colonisation.

The hopeful, largely idealistic beginnings of the SPI were later lost

and confused within a system increasingly accused of inefficiency and corrupt administration. In 1967 the *Figueiredo Report* was presented to the Minister of the Interior, General Albuquerque Lima, who later denounced the SPI at a press conference in Rio de Janeiro. Of 700 SPI employees, 134 were charged, 200 dismissed and another 34 relieved of their duties.¹⁷

In December 1967 the SPI was replaced by the National Indian Foundation, FUNAI (under Decree 5.371). The 1969 Brazilian Constitution recognised that Indians held usufruct rights to land, which would be owned by the state. The 1973 Indian Statute reaffirmed this: it gave the state rights to sub-surface resources on Indian lands and empowered and commanded FUNAI to legalise land titles by investigation, delimitation and demarcation, before the granting of a presidential decree. The Indian Statute also gave FUNAI powers forcibly to relocate Indians and to exercise control over resources on indigenous lands, including leasing the land to non-Indians. To compound the issue, two decrees were passed in 1983: one altered the procedure for demarcating Indian lands, and the second allowed the state to grant mining concessions even on demarcated land.¹⁸

The state strengthened its control over Indian land under increasing pressure from vested interests eager to exploit the resources of Indian homelands. Response and protest grew, both in Brazil and abroad. The reaction to the assault on Indian lands and rights became part of the wider call for the end of the military regime and for a new political order.

Constituent Assembly and the 1988 Constitution

By the time the two decrees were passed in 1983, elections the previous year had brought sweeping gains for the opposition: state governors were elected for the first time since 1965. In Rio de Janeiro a Xavante, Mário Juruna, was the first Indian to be elected to Congress, as federal deputy for the Democratic Labour Party (PDT).¹⁹ With the institution of the New Republic in 1985, the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI, founded in 1980) started to prepare the ground for the new Constitution by holding discussions in Indian *aldeias* (villages) and working with support groups to set up a five-point plan of action. The main demands were for recognition of territorial rights, demarcation and guarantee of Indian lands, exclusive usufruct of natural wealth (both above and below the ground), adequate resettlement of other Brazilians

who had occupied Indian land, and recognition and respect for the social and cultural organisations of indigenous people. These demands were simple, clear, and politically sensitive.²⁰

The Constituent Assembly, starting work in February 1987, divided into eight main committees and twenty-four sub-committees. In addition, a *Comissão de Sistematização* ('Coordinating Committee') of 93 members was set up to produce a workable draft. Discussion of Indian rights was first assigned to the 'Subcommittee of Blacks, Indians, Disabled and Minorities', and then to the 'Committee of Social Order'.²¹ The early debates within the subcommittee stressed the aboriginal rights of Indians and the importance of their ethnic and cultural identities, but still upheld the rights of federal government to determine specific conditions and to control mineral rights in Indian areas.²²

Throughout the debate over the new Constitution, there was increasing pressure from lobbies. The Indian voice was one amongst many in civil society, all clamouring to be heard. The first thrust against them came with the move to assimilate Indians into Brazilian society rather than treat them as a separate group, which would deprive them of protection and special status. This was roundly defeated in the Committee of Social Order, where overwhelming support was given to maintain the pluri-ethnic character of Brazilian society.²³ A second threat came from mining lobbies, supported by sectors of the federal government, who were trying to withdraw the use of the subsoil as part of the exclusive usufruct rights held by Indians over natural resources on their own lands. This was not so easily repulsed: anti-Indian interests won parallel victories in the Committees of Economic Order and Organisation of the State, introducing proposals over mineral rights which contradicted those established for Indian groups in the Committee of Social Order.²⁴

The question of control of mineral rights on Indian lands provoked the most violent reactions from the anti-Indian lobby in the third stage of debate over the Constitution. August 1987 saw the first public discussions of proposals put forward by the different committees, when the draft proposal, and subsequently its final version, were pulled together by the Coordinating Committee under the chairmanship of Deputy Bernardo Cabral, of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) from Amazonas. Existing incompatibilities were resolved by a separate chapter on the rights of Indians, while the article demanding the government to demarcate all Indian lands was put into the

Transitional Regulations. Other relevant clauses were transferred to the two chapters on legislative and judicial powers.²⁵

At this stage the opposition became fierce and vicious. The draft text restricted mineral exploitation on Indian lands to state companies, but this limitation provoked an energetic press campaign to discredit the Indian lobby and the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) in particular. The attack, it is said, had its roots in the private mining companies and was linked to the secretary general of the Council of National Security (CSN) and the government's FUNAI.

A series of five major reports in the influential, conservative, national daily newspaper, *O Estado de São Paulo*, accused the Church, and especially the CIMI, of supporting the internationalisation of the Amazon, of trying to restrict national sovereignty, and of, in effect, preventing Brazil from taking full advantage of the lucrative international mineral market.²⁶ The assault was so severe that a mixed Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry (CPI) was set up to examine the charges, reflecting widespread concern that the rights of Indians under the new Constitution might be seriously prejudiced.

The bitter public row had two results. One was that Cabral altered the draft project in order to propose that mineral exploration on Indian lands should be open to national companies. This was to be effected subject to the approval of Congress and the Indians, but without other criteria. (Previously, the proposal declared that exploration for minerals in Indian areas should be the privilege of the Union, subject to national interest, given the lack of sufficient known reserves for national consumption, and the approval of Congress and the Indians.) Other changes were also introduced, including two concepts which were bound to be difficult to verify or determine: that of Indian rights to 'lands of immemorial possession', and the distinction between Indians who were or were not 'acculturated' to Brazilian society.²⁷

A further reflection of the impact of these newspaper attacks, even while there was discussion of prosecuting the *Estado de São Paulo* for libel, was the removal by FUNAI of nine missionaries from Indian areas. One of those removed forcibly by police from the Yanomami area of Roraima was the only nurse in the region, Sister Florence. Her case was particularly striking because her stay there had been guaranteed by the head of the civil household of the president, Ronaldo Costa Couto; the president of FUNAI, Romero Jucá; and the president of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), Dom Luciano Mendes de Almeida.²⁸ The speed and severity of the FUNAI reaction were both a

measure of the ferocity of the attack on the Indian lobby and of the powerful interests aligned against it. Voting on the coordination of the social order section of the Constitution, which marked the end of the third stage of the Constituent Assembly, took place between 21 and 24 November 1987—before the dust had fully settled.

The final voting took place on 1 June 1988, after a period of intensive, well-organised lobbying in Brasília by the Indians and their supporters. In these last stages over 200 Indian leaders from about 40 Indian nations pressed their case daily. At the first round of voting, the chapter relating to Indians won the support of 497 of the total 559 delegates in the Constituent Assembly, and 423 supported it in the second round in August. Despite all the upheavals and struggles, the Indians had shown that they would not wait passively in their *aldeias* whilst non-Indians made decisions about them. Together with their supporters and allies from other sectors of Brazilian civil society, they had proved that they could also lobby Congress and put pressure on the political system.

The sections relating to Indians in the new Constitution are rightly seen as one of the more positive achievements, representing significant advances in the legal status of Indians. The Constitution now provides official recognition of Indian social organisations, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, as well as their original rights over the lands which they have traditionally occupied. It empowers the state to demarcate them, and to protect and ensure respect for all their property and *bens* (possessions) (Article 231).²⁹

There are also some significant advances in the legal status of Indians. They are no longer 'relatively incapacitated' as minors: they are still subject to the legal and administrative 'tutorship' of FUNAI, but can now initiate legal claims in defence of their rights and interests, with a legal obligation on the 'Public Ministry' (the Public Prosecutors) to act in their defence. Any cases concerning Indian rights fall within the jurisdiction of the Public Prosecutors.

In terms of rights to land, the Indian claim is now seen as 'original', preceding the establishment of the state itself. Any temporary removal of Indians from their lands (due to catastrophes, epidemics, or in the interests of national sovereignty) must be approved by Congress, with the immediate return of the Indians when the threat is over. The Constitution also requires the approval of Congress for any mineral or water resource developments on Indian lands, after taking evidence from the Indians affected.

This raises some basic questions: a report presented to Congress in

April 1988 shows that 53.5 per cent of Indian lands in Amazônia are already covered by licences for mineral exploration or exploitation.³⁰ Another section in the Constitution makes claims on Indian lands by non-Indians null and void, and any indemnification dependent upon the beneficiaries having obtained the land in good faith. If recent efforts to reclaim lands which are to be returned to Indians in Mato Grosso provide any hint as to the way events may go, such actions could lead to large claims for compensation. Often, however, such lands were taken over by more than dubious means, in the full knowledge that they belonged to Indians. Such acquisitions would give their present owners no claim under the Constitution.³¹

Finally, while the section demanding that the government demarcate all Indian lands by October 1993 is one that the Indian nations and their supporters consistently demanded, and while it had strong support in the Constituent Assembly, it is not clear how far these provisions will be enforced.³² Under the Indian Statute of 1973 all Indian tribal territories should have been fully demarcated by 1978, but a report published as late as October 1987 showed that only 7.9 per cent of the 518 Indian areas recognised by FUNAI were fully regularised. A further 167 (or 30 per cent) were without any official protection and almost nothing was known about them. About 33 per cent of the areas were only in the initial stages of demarcation, with just 6.8 per cent in the final stages, containing 8.5 per cent of the Indian population and 2.6 per cent of the area of Indian lands.³³

This sharp discrepancy between legal provision and political and social reality remains one of the more worrying questions with regard to the new Constitution and its sections on Indian rights. On paper these may be both positive and far-sighted, but the fierce and aggressive reaction to the Indian lobby has clearly shown that the question of Indian rights and Indian lands remains bound up with wider and more complex political and economic issues.

Pressures and contradictions

One of the most serious threats comes from the consistent failure of Brazilian governments to carry through any programme of urgently needed land reform. Any attempt to do so has resulted in fierce, often violent resistance. The military-led regime which seized power in the 1964 coup introduced a very modest Land Statute (Law 4504/64), but the law was not applied in the twenty-one years of military rule, and

the land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of large landowners.³⁴ By 1980, holdings under ten hectares made up 50.5 per cent of all holdings (2.4 per cent of all land), while 1 per cent of landowners held 45.8 per cent of all land in properties of over 10,000 hectares. In fact, *latifundios* (very large holdings) made up over 85 per cent of registered land.³⁵

Instead of tackling land reform, the military regime introduced such palliatives as the programme of national integration (PIN), linked to the programmes for road building in the Amazon, and substitutes for agrarian reform, such as the programme for the redistribution of land and the stimulus of agro-industry in the north and north-east (PROTERRA).³⁶ The government used the Amazon as a safety valve for problems in other areas: it gave incentives to national and multinational companies to invest and buy land in Amazônia, and encouraged poor, usually landless peasants to move from other regions into areas which often were home to the Indians. The whole situation was one which aggravated the turmoil over land.³⁷

One of the hopes of the New Republic and the Constituent Assembly was that agrarian reform would be introduced. Instead, a very powerful landowners lobby, the Democratic Union of Farming Interests (UDR), succeeded in throwing out proposals for reform. The constitutional provisions on agrarian reform are now even more retrograde than under the military Land Statute, and pressure on Indian lands from both government-directed and spontaneous colonisation, made ever easier by the construction of new roads, is bound to continue.

It is estimated that roads currently being built or planned, often financed by international agencies in the name of development, will affect about 51 per cent of Indian areas.³⁸ The BR364 from Cuiabá to Porto Velho, for example, is largely responsible for the 20 per cent annual population increase in Rondônia, bringing increasing pressure on the Aripuanã Park, one of the largest indigenous areas in Brazil, inhabited by some 16,000 Indians.³⁹ No less a threat to Indian areas is posed by logging activities, large-scale commercial farming, and mining interests. Thousands of prospectors are pouring into Indian areas to exploit the enormous sub-soil wealth of Amazônia and the lands traditionally occupied by Indian communities.

Over the last fifteen years, satellite surveys in particular have revealed a wide range of mineral deposits: gold, iron-ore, manganese, bauxite, uranium and cassiterite, for example. Hence the flood of *garimpeiros* (prospectors) into Roraima, Rondônia, Amazonas and Pará. It is

claimed that almost 30 per cent of the 518 Indian areas in twenty-two separate regions recognised by FUNAI are now infiltrated by prospectors. As many as 45,000 armed *garimpeiros* are already in Roraima, working in lands inhabited by the Yanomami, Macuxi and Wapixana Indians.⁴⁰

Perhaps the most spectacular, and best known, incursions of all have come, not from individual *garimpeiros*, but from the government itself. With the constant pressure to pay off the world's largest foreign debt of US\$120 billion, the federal government has sought by any means to win foreign currency. One such development scheme is the iron-ore mining project of Carajás, in eastern Amazônia.⁴¹

Another is for a series of hydro-electric projects, starting with Tucuruí.⁴² Plans to construct even more dams have been fiercely resisted by Indian nations. These threaten to affect 40 per cent of Indian lands in forty Indian areas.⁴³ Such programmes frequently regard the Indians as an obstacle to development, considering that too much land is assigned to too few people, who must give way to the overall interests of the national economy.

The military and Calha Norte

The armed forces have always been a key political actor in the whole debate over the future of the Amazon, and this is still true today, even under the New Republic. The leaders of the armed forces are crucial in deciding how far constitutional and other guarantees are observed.

On balance, the outlook is unfavourable to the Indians. There have always been those, especially in the army, who have preserved concern for the Indians, but by far the strongest line of influence has pursued the two concepts, central to Brazilian military debate, of 'security and development'.⁴⁴ These concepts are at the very heart of military writing on geopolitics,⁴⁵ and underpin current military thinking on the Amazon, as reflected in a project to which the armed forces leadership attaches great importance: the Calha Norte Project (PCN).

Originally kept secret, the PCN was devised under the auspices of the National Security Council (CSN, now the Secretariat for the Assessment of National Defence- SADEN/PR) and was presented to President Sarney on 19 June 1985, just three months after the start of the New Republic.⁴⁶ The aims are to increase bilateral relations between Amazon countries, increase military presence, define and demarcate more clearly the nation's boundaries, define and appropriate indigenous policy for the region, improve infrastructure and industry and promote

settlement.⁴⁷ The project was apparently prepared without any background survey, developmental analysis, ecological assessment or debate over social and economic implications.

The overall aim is to improve the utilisation of land in a swathe about 160 km deep, along the 6,500 km northern frontier of Brazil from Tabatinga on the Colombian border (close to Peru), right across to the Atlantic Coast. The PCN covers an area equivalent to 14 per cent of Brazil, and 24 per cent of the Amazon, aiming 'effectively to integrate the area into the national context, given the great difficulties to development imposed by the environment'. It stresses that 'the tasks linked to security and development' in the frontier region 'are extremely complex and only capable of being carried out in the long term', urging the need for secrecy, so as not 'to raise exaggerated hopes at home or unfounded fears in neighbouring countries'.⁴⁸

One of the explicit intentions of the Calha Norte Project is 'to enlarge the work of FUNAI among the indigenous populations', noting that the area is marked by the 'rudimentary nature of its productive forms, with a small population limited to the capital cities of the states and territories, delimited by an extensive strip of frontier in which are found large indigenous areas'.⁴⁹ It is estimated that the project will, in fact, affect between 45,000 and 80,000 Indians, in areas potentially exceptionally rich in mineral resources.

The plan stated that immediate action was needed first in the Yanomami area, Indian population 7,500 (sic) and scattered along 900 km of frontier, where pressures urged 'the creation of a separate Yanomami state', and second in the area known as the Cabeça do Cachorro, on the upper Rio Negro, along the border with Colombia and Venezuela, where Indian problems existed, along with illegal mining, smuggling and drug trafficking. Thirdly in the Roraima area, along the frontier with Guyana, considered a potential conflict zone, and finally in the areas of the Alto Solimões, Tumucumpaque, and in Amapá.⁵⁰ The priorities for action, the plan claimed, were determined by the existence of 'Indian problems' and would require a strengthening of the work with FUNAI.

The subject of an 'Indian problem' is one open to different interpretations, but in general such a problem, it seems, only exists where there are competing demands over land between Indians and non-Indians. There are, however, other dimensions to the 'Indian problem' in the PCN area, largely linked to the substantial population of 'acculturated' or 'detrified' Indians, depending on one's point of view. So, for

instance, some 18,000 Indians now live as urban inhabitants in Manaus, and 8,000 in Boa Vista.⁵¹ Some *municípios*, too, are heavily Indian. In São Gabriel do Cachoeira, at the heart of the Cabeça do Cachorro, a region now producing cassiterite and gold, 90.2 per cent of the population are Indian.

Throughout Roraima, Indians make up substantial portions of the rural population, nearly 17 per cent around the state capital, Boa Vista, and 23 per cent in Bonfim (near to the border with Guyana), and as much as 92.7 per cent in Normandie. In the Solimões area, again linked under Calha Norte to the 'Indian problems', the 1980 census shows the rural Indian population of Tabatinga to be 80.3 per cent, of Benjamin Constant 24 per cent, Santo Antonio 32 per cent, São Paulo de Oliveira 64.6 per cent and Amatura 75.5 per cent.⁵²

Apart from such problems of definition, CIMI has claimed that under the PCN there is no intention to demarcate Indian lands in the frontier area, or where lands are particularly extensive, or which are close to cities, or in areas crossed by federal roads or by rivers. They see this as part of the wider Indian policy of the New Republic, which they believe is basically hostile to the Indians, and which ultimately aims to free Indian lands for 'speculation or predatory exploitation'.⁵³

This charge of a hidden military agenda is a serious one, which would be denied by the military leaders and such architects of the Calha Norte Project as General Rubem Bayma Denys, head of the President's military household and Secretary General of the National Security Council. Charges still persist, however, that even while the Constituent Assembly was sitting, the CSN was working secretly with the cooperation of the President to limit the protection to be afforded to Indian lands, and, by using old-style decree laws from the military regime, to open up Indian lands for exploitation.

For example, in the case of the Yanomami area, instead of delimiting the true area of Indian lands in the Park, which had been demanded for twenty years, a new strategy determined a series of smaller, discontinuous Indian areas, to be known, under Decree No 94,946 of 23 September 1987, as *colônias indígenas* (Indian colonies). Land in between these would be made into forest reserves and would be available for exploitation by non-Indians. Each Indian group would now be isolated and encircled. (Similarly, in Acre, demarcation of nineteen areas of land was pushed through in an attempt to amend the Constitution.)⁵⁴

Even after the Constitution was promulgated, an interministerial decree, No 160 of September 1988, proposed in effect to dispossess the

Indians of some 70 per cent of their lands. Despite the passing of Article 234 in the Constitution, guaranteeing the original rights of Indians to their lands, Decree No 160 was reinforced further by Decree No 250, on 18 November 1988. This use of ad hoc decrees has been seen as an act of violence against Indians, stemming directly from the executive, provoking deep alarm over how far constitutional provision can survive the pressures of powerful vested interests.⁵⁵

There is no doubt that, granted sufficient political will, the constitutional guarantees of Indian rights and land could be enforced. As one general put it: 'to withdraw the 50,000 prospectors from Yanomami lands is a political, not a military decision'.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that, under the present government, at least, the political will is not there.

Conclusion

The Indians are deeply worried about the threats that hang over them, their lands, and their whole way of life, despite the paper principles of the new Constitution. Not only is their way of life threatened, but also their lives: from contact with infectious diseases and from the escalating rural violence that has targeted Indian leaders and Indian groups.⁵⁷

The meeting at Altamira, the 'First Encounter of Native Peoples in the Xingu' from 20-25 February 1989, brought together Indian representatives from all over Brazil and the Americas, many travelling for days to reach this small Amazon town. The meeting was reported extensively by the world's newspapers and television reporters, and supported by politicians and Indian campaigners at both national and international levels.

Tancredo Neves, principal formulator of the New Republic, while he was still governor of Minas Gerais advised Marcos Terena, an Indian leader, that the media should be mastered in order to reach into the home of every Brazilian, rich and poor. The events at Altamira represent successful adaptation to, and use of, a culture which is unimaginably remote from the normal life of an Indian *aldeia*. The mastery of the media and the effectiveness of political lobbying show greater adaptation to the demands of non-Indian culture and life-style than non-Indians have made to an ancient and sophisticated way of life.

Indian leaders are increasingly well known in Brazil: Mário Juruna (federal deputy in 1982), Airton Krenari (president of the UNI), Estevão Taukañi, Megaron Txucaramãe, Raoni, Paulinho Paiakan, Kube-i

Kayapó, Davi Yanomami and Marcos Terena are all vigorous spokesmen for a cause which has transcended the national political system to find a wider audience. Their campaign, like that of other ethnic groups and minority interests, is a fight amongst other things against the decisions and policies of a central government, to preserve their way of life.

One lesson they have certainly learned is that their salvation and survival, despite a Constitution drafted and promulgated in Brasília, lies in their own hands. In January 1989 Davi Yanomami, like Chico Mendes before him, was presented in Brasília with the coveted 'Global 500' award by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). His acceptance speech came from the heart. It reflected a sincere awareness that the plight of the Indians could not, and should not, be separated from that of the other oppressed, exploited people of Brazil, whose suffering and the cause of it the Indians understood. He ended with a defiant challenge:

... After the Indian suffers, the White will suffer too. And the war will come among you: Venezuelanos [sic] and Brazilians will fight, you will see ... The Whites say Brazil is going to get better, but it is getting worse. The Whites also suffer, the poor ... The government just wants everything for itself. They should not be doing that, no. They should give to the poor also. Do they think that when they die they will take all this with them? No, they will have to leave it here ...¹

In November 1989, a new president will be elected in Brazil: a non-Indian. He will be the first directly elected president since 1960. The new Constitution will now have to find detailed expression in new legislation to ensure the integrity of the Indian nations in Brazil, of their lives, culture and lands. The 'Indian question' must be placed high on the new president's agenda.

Notes

¹ E Allen, *Poverty and Social Welfare in Brazil: a challenge for civilian government*, University of Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, occasional paper no 44, 1985; and *Housing Programmes, Opposition Government, and the Move towards Democracy in Brazil: 1983-1986*, University of Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, occasional paper no 49, 1988.

² E Allen, 'Why there's such a lot of killing in Brazil', *Glasgow Herald* (Glasgow), 18 April 1989, p 11.

³ J Hemming, *Amazon Frontier, the defeat of the Brazilian Indians*, London: Macmillan, 1987, pp 211-37; J Santos, *Cabanagem em Santarém*, Santarém: Livraria Atica, 1986.

⁴ See Euclides da Cunha's brilliant novel *Os Sertões*, translated by Samuel Putnam as *Rebellion*

- in the Backlands*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944. See also J M Bello, *A History of Modern Brazil 1889-1964*, translated by J L Taylor, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966, pp 149-55; and G Carneiro, *História das Revoluções Brasileiras*, volume 1, Rio de Janeiro, 1965, pp 96-117.
- ⁵ See, for example, 'Os cem anos da Abolição, *Visão* (São Paulo), 11 May 1988, pp 26-9, and 'Negros' in *Veja* (Rio de Janeiro), 11 May 1988, pp 20-43.
- ⁶ C H Wood and J A Magno de Carvalho, *The Demography of Inequality in Brazil*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Latin American Studies no 67, 1988, pp 135-43.
- ⁷ B Ribeiro, 'Quantas seriam os índios das Américas?', *Ciência Hoje* (Rio de Janeiro) volume 6, May/June 1983, pp 54-60. Opinions on this figure vary: Centro Eumênico de Documentação e Informação, *Terras Indígenas no Brasil*, São Paulo: CEDI, 1987, p 24 refers to a total of 213,353 Indians, although some believe there are as many as 250,000.
- ⁸ *Parantim*, Brasília, April 1982.
- ⁹ J Gayger, *Questão Indígena no Brasil*, mimeo, Brasília, November 1988, p 1.
- ¹⁰ Until recently, they constituted probably the largest Indian group in South America still isolated from non-Indian society. See A Ramos and K Taylor, *The Yanomami in Brazil* 1979, Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), 1979.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* See also B Albert and A R Ramos, 'O extermínio "acadêmico" do Yanomami', *Humanidades* (Brasília) no 18 ano VII/1988, pp 85-9. "'Final Solution" for tribe attacked', *The Independent* (London), 11 October 1988, and S Fisher, 'Indian lives at risk in Venezuela gold rush', *The Independent*, 17 April 1989.
- ¹² See Comissão Pro-Índio/SP, *O Índio e a Cidadania Brasileira*, São Paulo, 1983, pp 59-95, 'Índios: os Pataxós pedem socorro' *Visão* (São Paulo), 3 July 1985, pp 30-34, and A Gray, *The Amerindians of South America*, London: Minority Rights Group, report no 15, July 1978, p 19.
- ¹³ D Ribeiro, *Os Índios e a Civilização*, Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1977, p 238, and B Ribeiro, 'Quantas seriam os índios das Américas?', p 60.
- ¹⁴ E da Cunha, *Os Sertões*.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, *O Guarani*, published in 1857, and *Iracema*, published in 1865. J de Alencar, *Obras Completas*, volumes 2 and 3, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar, 1958.
- ¹⁶ There is still surprisingly little written about Rondon. See S Davis, *Victims of the Miracle: development and the Indians of Brazil*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp 2-5.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp 10-11.
- ¹⁸ A Gray, *The Amerindians of South America*, pp 18-19; M C da Cunha, *Os Direitos do Índio. ensaios e documentos*, São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987, pp 53-102; and F Arnaud, *Aspectos da legislação sobre os Índios do Brasil*, monograph no 22, Belém: Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, 1973.
- ¹⁹ Juruna was not re-elected in 1986. In those elections, there were nine Indian candidates in eight states, but none were elected. In recent elections for mayors in November 1988, forty-eight Indians presented themselves as candidates.
- ²⁰ J C de Almeida Libânio, 'O índio e seus direitos na Constituinte', *Caderno CEAAC 1988* Constituinte: Temas em Análise, ano 1, no 1, Universidade de Brasília Centro de Estudos e Acompanhamento da Constituinte, pp 113-19; da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, pp 169-70. M Santilli, 'Índios e Constituinte', *Ciência Hoje* (Rio de Janeiro), 6(34) August 1987, pp 17-18. These interest groups included: the Brazilian Association of Anthropologists (ABA); the Catholic-based Indigenous Missionary Council and National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CIMI/CNBB); Pro-Indian Commissions (CPIs) from various states; the National Coordination of Geologists (CUNAGIL); the Eumênico Centre for Documentation and Information (CEDI); the Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park (CCPY); and the Institute of Socio-Economic Studies (INISEC).
- ²¹ See D Fleischer, 'The Constituent Assembly and the transformation strategy: attempts to shift political power from the presidency to Congress' in L Graham and R Wilson (eds), *Contemporary Issues in Brazilian Public Policy*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1989.
- ²² J Gayger, *Questão Indígena no Brasil*, p 25.
- ²³ M Santilli, 'Índios e Constituinte', p 17.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.* p 17.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* p 17.
- ²⁶ Under the banner of *Os Índios na Nova Constituição*, the following articles appeared, 9 August 1987: 'A conspiração contra o Brasil'; 11 August 1987: 'Nem só de índios vive o CIMI'; 12

- August 1987: 'O CIMI e seus "irmãos do estanho"'; 13 August 1987: 'Índios, o caminho para os minérios', 14 August 1987: 'CIMI propõe a divisão do Brasil'; and 15 August 1987: 'O evangelho do CIMI: índio, ouro...'. See also C Peters, 'Índios, terra cobijada', *Senhor* 339, 15 September 1987, pp 52-3; M Santilli, 'Índios e Constituinte'; and J Gayger, *Questão Indígena no Brasil*, pp 25-7. The mineral company involved was later revealed to be the influential Paranapenema firm.
- ²⁷ See A C Prado and C Peters, 'O perigo sem cara pálida', *Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro) 346, 3 November 1987, pp 52-7; also J Gayger, *Questão Indígena no Brasil*, pp 25-6, and M Santilli, *O saldo da luta*, mimeo of a paper presented at the opening of a seminar on 'Questão Indígena na Constituinte—Avaliação e Perspectiva', p 1.
- ²⁸ C Peters, 'Índios, terra cobijada', pp 52-3.
- ²⁹ Chapter 8, Articles 231 and 232, in Section 8 on Social Order, describe the principal rights of Indians. Articles 20, 22, 49, 109, 129, 176, 210 and Transitional Article 67 also refer specifically to Indian rights.
- ³⁰ *Empresas de Mineração e Temas Indígenas na Amazônia*, São Paulo: Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação, September 1987. The data shown here also helps to confound the false statements made by the *Estado do São Paulo* (São Paulo) in August 1987. See also C Peters, 'Mineração: sos indígena', *Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro) 369, 18 April 1988, pp 50-51.
- ³¹ C Peters, 'Saque contra a União', *Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro) 353, 22 December 1987, pp 42-4. Some lands for expropriation for return to the Indian groups have a number of titles for separate areas, with sales of land taking place, and being registered, well after it was known that they belonged to the Indians of the Xingu Park.
- ³² A survey carried out in March 1988, among the members of the Constituent Assembly, showed 53.1 per cent in favour of demarcation of Indian lands currently occupied; 46 per cent thought the Indians should have permanent possession, with usufruct of all the natural resources. IBASE/INESC: Universidade de Brasília: *Relatório de Pesquisa Constituinte*, March 1988, pp 16-17.
- ³³ *Terras Indígenas no Brasil*, São Paulo: CFDT, 1987. See J Gayger, *Questão Indígena no Brasil*, p 5, and J P de Oliveira Fo, 'Fronteiras de Papel: o reconhecimento oficial das terras indígenas', *Humanidades* (Brasília) 18, ano V/1988, pp 93-4.
- ³⁴ See J de Souza Martins, 'The State and the militarisation of the agrarian question in Brazil', in M Schmink and C Wood, *Frontier Expansion in Amazônia*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984, pp 463-9.
- ³⁵ Instituto Brasileiro de Análise Sociais e Econômica (IBASE), *Notas e Reflexões sobre a Questão Agrária*, Rio de Janeiro, August 1986, pp 3-5.
- ³⁶ P Flynn, *Brazil: a political analysis*, London: Ernest Benn, 1978, pp 452-4. On the highway programme of the Médici government, which directly affected 161 Indian groups (90 per cent of all Amazon groups). See A R Ramos 'Development, integration, and the ethnic integrity of Brazilian Indians' in F B Scazzocchio, *Land, People and Planning in Contemporary Amazônia*, Cambridge: Centre of Latin American Studies, occasional paper no 3, 1980, p 224.
- ³⁷ R Santos, 'Law and social change; the problem of land in the Brazilian Amazon' in M Schmink and C Wood, *Frontier Expansion in Amazônia*, p 455.
- ³⁸ J P de Oliveira Fo, 'Fronteiras de Papel', p 95.
- ³⁹ C Junqueira and B Mindlin, *The Aripuanã Park and the Polonoroeste Programme*, Copenhagen: IWGIA document 59, July 1987, and E Martins, *Nossos Índios Nossos Mortos: os olhos da 'Emancipação'*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora CIVIS/CR, Fourth Edition, 1982, pp 175-88.
- ⁴⁰ See M Ashford, '"Wild West" gold rush in Brazil is threat to Indians', *Daily Telegraph* (London), 3 February 1989, p 10; 's.o.s. Yanomami', *Istoé/Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro) 1008, 11 January 1989, p 45; 'Amazon burns: Yanomami prizewinner's warning', *Survival International News* 24, April 1989, p 2; and J P de Oliveira Fo, 'Fronteiras de Papel', p 95. Contrast this with the case of the Kayapó of Gorotire who take a 40 per cent tax on profits of gold mined on their land. See V Lea, 'Brazil's Kayapó Indians: beset by golden curse', *National Geographic Magazine*, May 1984, pp 675-94.
- ⁴¹ A R Ramos, 'Frontier expansion and Indian peoples in the Brazilian Amazon', in M Schmink and C Wood, *Frontier Expansion in Amazônia*, pp 83-104, and D Trecece, *Bound in Misery and Iron: the impact of the Grande Carajás programme on the Indians of Brazil*, London: Survival International, 1987.
- ⁴² L Mugeout, *Future Hydroelectric Development in Brazilian Amazonia I. towards comprehensive population resettlement*, University of Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, occasional paper (forthcoming).

- ⁴³ J P de Oliveira Fo, 'Fronteiras de Papel', pp 95-6; A Gray, *The Amerindians of South America*, p 19; J Gayger, 'Questão Indígena no Brasil', p 20, and P Aspelin and S C dos Santos, *Indian Areas threatened by Hydro-electric Projects in Brazil*, Copenhagen: IWGIA document 44, 1981.
- ⁴⁴ This is the title of the journal of the ISG, the National War College, founded in 1949, which has strongly influenced both military theory and attitudes to politics. See P Flynn, *Brazil*, pp 151-2, 317-25.
- ⁴⁵ G do Couto e Silva, *Geopolítica do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editora, 2nd edition, 1967; M Mattos, *Uma Geopolítica Pan-Amazônica*, Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1980, and 'Militares conduzem a política de ocupação', *Porantim* (Brasília), November 1988, p 3.
- ⁴⁶ The press finally seized upon FPN in October 1986. See, for example: D Azevedo, 'Governo tem plano de ocupação militar da fronteira norte', *Folha de São Paulo* (São Paulo), 31 October 1986; and R Benevides and R Amaral, 'Governo quer ocupar sigilosamente fronteiras do norte', *Jornal da Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), 31 October 1986.
- ⁴⁷ Exposição de Motivos (EM) no 018/85 of 19 June 1985 from Brigade General Rubens Bayma Denys, Minister of State and Secretary General of the CSN to President José Sarney, and *Desenvolvimento e Segurança na Região do Norte das Calhas dos Rios Solimões e Amazonas - Projeto Calha Norte*, 19 June 1985, pp 3-4.
- ⁴⁸ EM no 018/85.
- ⁴⁹ R Benevides and R Amaral, 'Governo quer ocupar sigilosamente fronteiras do norte'.
- ⁵⁰ *Desenvolvimento e Segurança na Região* . . . , pp 5-6.
- ⁵¹ J de Souza Martins, *Não há terra para plantar neste verão: o cerne das terras indígenas e das terras de trabalho no renascimento político do campo*, Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986, pp 25-6.
- ⁵² J P de Oliveira Fo, 'Fronteiras de Papel', p 97.
- ⁵³ 'CIMI repudia a criação do Calha Norte', *Jornal da Brasília* (Brasília), 1 November 1986, and 'Militares neo-Republicanos querem acabar com os povos das fronteiras', *Porantim* (Brasília), November 1986.
- ⁵⁴ J Gayger, 'Questão Indígena no Brasil', p 22; 's.o.s. Yanomami', *Istoé/Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro) 1008, 11 January 1989, p 45. A similar scheme was attempted in the Upper Rio Negro on Tukano lands. 'A FUNAI está compesa de demarcar o maior numero de colônias indígenas antes da promulgação da nova Constituição', quoted in 'Manipulação respalda Calha Norte', *Porantim* (Brasília), September 1988, p 7. See also 'Alto Rio Negro Lideranças não aceitam colônias', *Porantim* (Brasília), July/August 1988, p 3.
- ⁵⁵ M M Carneiro da Cunha, 'Violência e Minorias: O último cereo aos indígenas', *Ciência Hoje* (Rio de Janeiro), suplemento 5 (28), January/February 1987, p 17. She claims that this is only one of three kinds of violence against Indians, the others being physical violence, including violence over land rights, and disrespect for Indian legislation.
- ⁵⁶ *Istoé/Senhor*, 1020, 5 April 1989, p.50.
- ⁵⁷ See, for example, the Amnesty International documents on rural violence in Brazil. AMR 19/17/88; AMR 19/05/88; and AMR 19/06/88. The failure of the authorities to act promptly and to investigate violence against Brazil's Indians is a cause for concern. See *Brazil: Cases of Killings and Ill-treatment of Indigenous Peoples*, AMR 19/12/88, November 1988.
- ⁵⁸ Quoted in 'Amazon Burns', *Survival International News*.

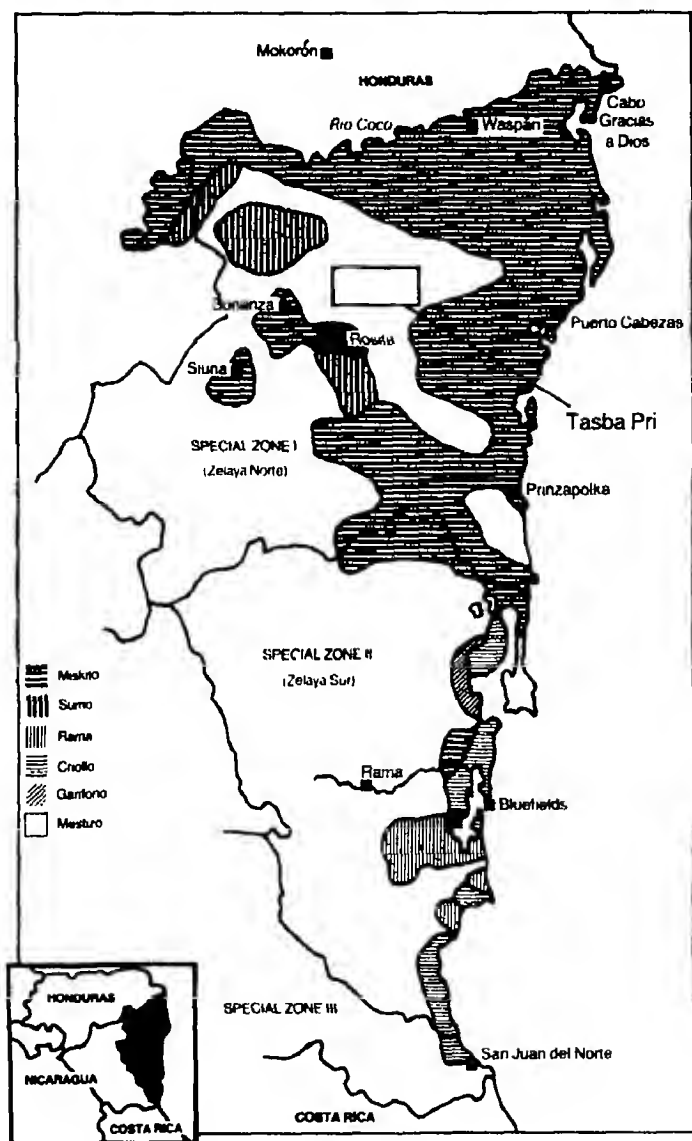
Nationalist revolution and ethnic rights: the Miskitu Indians of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua is home to six different ethnic groups, speaking four different languages. Of these, the majority and the culturally dominant group are the Spanish-speaking Mestizos who have migrated at different periods from the Pacific Coast. Two minority groups, the Sumu and Rama Indians, are direct descendants of indigenous peoples, now much reduced in number; only the Sumu still speak their own language. The others are products of contact and intermarriage between indigenous peoples and various groups of settlers. The Miskitu, the largest minority, evolved as a separate people in the seventeenth century from the intermarriage of Sumu Indians with English pirates and settlers and escaped African slaves. The second largest minority, the English-speaking Creoles, descends from white settlers on the Coast and the African slaves they imported in the eighteenth century, and has incorporated further migrations of Afro-Caribbean workers from the Anglophone Caribbean. There is also a small population of Garifuna or Black Caribs, descended from the intermarriage of indigenous Carib Indians and escaped African slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹

Before the Sandinista revolution of 1979, little was known of these groups and little international concern was shown for their rights. They became an issue only when the policies of the Sandinista Government of National Reconstruction flared into confrontation with one group, the Miskitu. As this conflict merged with the counter-revolutionary war, the agenda of public debate on ethnic rights within the revolution was increasingly set by opposition forces both within and outside Nicaragua.

This had important effects on public understanding. Firstly, the Miskitu conflict was so highlighted that the multi-ethnic character of the Atlantic Coast and the complex relationships between Miskitu claims and those of other groups was obscured. Secondly, the crude anti-communist terms in which much of the debate was initiated masked the relationship between Sandinista policies and the older tradition of Latin

Demographic map of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua



The autonomous regions of North and South Atlantic, constituted by the 1987 autonomy law, broadly correspond to special zones I and II.

Map by Sandra Oakins, copyright (c) Zed Books, London, 1985.

Population sizes of ethnic groups of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast

Ethnic group	Population	Percentage AC total	Percentage national total ^a	Mother tongue	Origin
Mestizos	150,000	56.5	4.8	Spanish	Country's inland
Miskitu	80,000	30.2	2.9	Miskitu	Pre-Hispanic mixed with European, African, Sumu, Rama
Creoles	25,000	9.4	0.8	Creole-English	Afro-Caribbean mixed with European
Sumu	8,000	3.0	0.3	Sumu	Pre-Hispanic
Black Caribs	1,500	0.6	+ %	Creole-English/Garifuna	Afro-Caribbean/Indian from St Vincent
Ramas	c800	0.3	+ %	Creole/Ramu	Pre-Hispanic

These figures, used by the Autonomy Commission, are rough approximations, since no census has been made of the Coast since 1982. Sources: J Freeland, *A Special Place in History: the Atlantic Coast in the Nicaraguan revolution*, 1988, p 16, updated from *Envio* 8(93), April 1989, p 35.

^a Based on a conservatively estimated population of 3.1 million.

^b Includes refugees in Honduras, who began returning at a rate of 100 per week in 1986.

There was also a small population of Chinese, established as traders since the 1880s. Many of these left the country after the revolution

(See map for geographical location of groups)

American liberation struggles. Thirdly, the reconciliation process begun in 1983 was interpreted as a reluctant capitulation to outside pressures, without consideration of the grassroots process from which it is inseparable.²

In fact, a commitment to liberate the peoples of the Coast was written into the *Historic Programme* of the National Directorate of the Frente Sandinista (FSLN) in 1969.³ Nevertheless, the Sandinista approach to ethnic rights, deriving as it did from a nationalist, anti-imperialist and class-based ideology, was limited and inherently contradictory. This article shows how these contradictions emerged as policy became practice, and met head-on the ideology of ethnic nationalism which had developed on the Coast, especially among the Miskitu. The search, from 1983 onwards, for a political resolution of the conflict, culminating in the continuing autonomy process, is seen as part of the same dialectic.

Limitations of space preclude a full treatment of the revolution's impact on the Atlantic Coast, which would detail its relations with all the ethnic minorities, each of which had its own perspective.⁴ Nevertheless, the Miskitu conflict will be situated within its multi-ethnic context. This is particularly important in considering the Law of Autonomy for the Atlantic Coast, passed unanimously by the

National Assembly in September 1987, and the grassroots consultation process which led up to it.

Because Nicaragua has incorporated international law and human rights treaties into its domestic law, it has become a test case for the development of indigenous rights.⁵ As such, it is scrutinised not only by those anxious to fault the revolutionary government; but also by marginalised ethnic minorities, present throughout the Americas, who see the Nicaraguan process as a touchstone for assessing their own governments' commitment to involving them in their own political future.

International, inter-regional and inter-ethnic competition

Whereas the Atlantic Coast is multi-ethnic, multilingual, and has strong Anglo-American loyalties, Pacific Coast society is ethnically homogeneous and Hispanoamerican. Their striking differences derive from the colonisation by Spain of the Pacific Coast in the sixteenth century, and by England of the Atlantic in the seventeenth century. They have been exaggerated through geopolitical competition between the two cultures throughout the Americas, and fostered to serve the economic and strategic interests of great powers, especially in view of Nicaragua's potential as a site for an interoceanic canal.⁶

On the Atlantic Coast in particular, social and political change has largely come about through a series of adaptations to the intervention of different external powers: first Britain, then the USA, and finally the Nicaraguan state itself. In their dealings with the Coast's peoples, each power has privileged particular ethnic groups, thus changing the interaction between them all, and giving rise over time to the complex of inter-ethnic divisions and rivalries inherited by the Sandinistas in 1979.

Foreign contact first impinged on the Coast's inter-ethnic relations in the seventeenth century. Though Spain laid claim to the whole of Central America, Indian resistance and the inhospitable climate delayed Spanish settlement of its Atlantic Coast. As competition increased between Spain and Britain for control of the Caribbean, relations between British traders and buccaneers and the Miskitu Indians gradually evolved into a more official alliance in common cause against Spanish occupation, whereby, in return for support against enslavement or extermination under Spanish rule, the Miskitu furthered British economic interests in the region. The alliance was politically formalised in 1687, when a Miskitu chief was crowned king of 'Mosquitia', as the region

was known. This monarchy owed allegiance to the British Crown, and indirectly ruled the Coast's other Indians on Britain's behalf until well into the nineteenth century.⁷

The lower echelons of this hierarchy were swelled, in the eighteenth century, by black slaves imported from the Caribbean to work in the prospering British plantations and lumber trade. As in other parts of the Caribbean, colonisers and slaves intermarried, and their offspring and other favoured slaves were helped by their masters to acquire land. They came to form an elite group, known as Creoles, who moved easily into economic positions vacated by the British when they were forced into temporary withdrawal (1783–1825).

Paradoxically, the net effect on this region of Central America's independence from Spain (1821) was a power vacuum which permitted Britain to reactivate the Miskitu monarchy and extend it as far as Belize. The revival of British lumber interests encouraged the migration of Belizean and Jamaican Creoles, and later of freed and emancipated slaves from other parts of the Caribbean, who swelled the Creole communities but did not immediately alter the social order.⁸

Instead the development of this outpost of the Anglophone Caribbean was interrupted by the interacting pressures of US claims, under the Monroe Doctrine, to exclusive influence in the Americas, and Nicaraguan nationalism. They brought a rapid succession of changes which, by the end of the century, had shattered Miskitu hegemony and reduced all the ethnic minorities of the Coast to the position of marginalised minorities. In 1860, Britain drew back from open conflict with the USA, ceding part of Mosquitia to Nicaraguan rule in the Treaty of Managua. The remainder was constituted into a North American-style Miskitu reserve.

The treaty ostensibly guaranteed Miskitu autonomy: the reserve kept its own languages and customs, and was officially self-governing, except in external affairs. But Nicaragua retained control of the rivers and ports at its northern and southern frontiers. Consequently, major Miskitu territories along both rivers came immediately under Managua's jurisdiction. Bluefields, the main Creole centre, became capital of the reserve. Though the Miskitu king retained nominal control, real power lay with a local advisory council composed largely of Creoles. These arrangements divided the Miskitu communities, and by giving control to Creoles hastened the decline of Miskitu hegemony.⁹

From around the 1830s, US economic interests increasingly penetrated the Atlantic Coast economy. Its rich resources of rubber, precious woods, fish and gold were exploited in a succession of boom and bust

cycles by US company enclaves whose power only finally declined in the 1960s. The Miskitu, materially dependent on imported goods since contact with Britain, now had to earn them by casual wage-labour. To Creoles though, the enclaves gave further opportunity for advancement: their literate skills in English, acquired through Moravian education, assured their superiority over other ethnic groups in the labour hierarchy.¹⁰

Indeed, the Moravians, who first reached the Coast from Germany in 1849, played a central role in the changing relations between Creoles and Miskitu. They gave greater cultural cohesion to the Creoles, especially by providing English-language education. For the Miskitu, their translation of the Bible, and their use of the Miskitu language for religious instruction even among the Sumu, was an important affirmation of Miskitu culture against the destabilising effects of the enclaves and the formation of the reserve. But it also indirectly furthered the Creole ascendancy. A series of natural disasters and the death by poisoning of King William Henry Clarence (1879) exacerbated a general fear of the dissolution of Miskitu society, and in 1881 whole communities sought salvation through conversion to Moravianism, in what Moravian chroniclers call the 'Great Awakening'.¹¹ The mass conversion created an urgent need for lay pastors which could not be met from German mission headquarters, and converted Creoles were trained instead. This new role powerfully reinforced Creole authority among the Miskitu.

Hence, the interlocking effects of British withdrawal, the formation of the reserve, and the activities of Moravian missionaries and US companies gradually produced a new ethnic hierarchy: Creoles replaced Miskitu as the dominant ethnic group and colonial intermediaries, in the reserve, in the Church and in the enclaves.

Creole ascendancy, however, soon succumbed to the effects of Nicaraguan nationalism. In 1893, Pacific Coast developments brought to power the Liberal President José Santos Zelaya, with a project to unify and modernise the Nicaraguan state. When in 1894 the Creole leadership defended the autonomy of the reserve, he militarily occupied Bluefields. In a clumsy attempt at cultural unification, Creoles were ousted from government and business administration by Spanish-speaking *Mestizos*, and Spanish replaced English as the official language. Far from achieving national unity, 'reincorporation' (as it was officially known) rekindled the old hostility to 'the Spanish'. From now on, Pacific and Atlantic Coast interpretations of Nicaraguan history became mirror images of each other: on the Pacific Coast, ideals of national sovereignty

struggled against policies of subordination to US interests, while the Atlantic Coast aspired to independence from 'Spanish' domination, and nurtured Anglo-American loyalties.

Consequently, the most prevalent *costeño* memory of Sandino's nationalist guerrilla forces, active on the Coast from 1926–32, is as 'bandits', the assassins of a Moravian missionary taken for a US spy, who brought economic disruption and hardship. Yet, as Ortiz points out, Sandino was well served by a Miskitu and a Creole general, and his successes against the Standard Fruit Company in Miskitu territory depended on good local support. Indeed, he was deeply committed to developing the cooperatives he had set up along the River Coco.¹²

By contrast, the Somoza regime, a reign of terror for Pacific Coast society, had less impact on the Atlantic. Indeed, contacts between state and communities were minimal, and neglect and isolation gave many an illusion of autonomy. Nevertheless, an uncaring 'Spanish' state was compared unfavourably with the Moravian mission which, with aid from its US headquarters, provided the only social services available on the Coast, and when the US companies finally withdrew in the 1960s the boom-times were remembered as a golden age,¹³ though they left a depressed economy, a depleted environment and little infrastructure. In 1979 there were only two main roads for the rapid removal of raw materials to the ports; neither connected the region to Managua, nor even linked the two main centres, Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas. Travel within the region was by water. To Managua, it took six hours by river to Rama, and a further four by road. There was no telephone link.

In this isolated and fragmented society, where religion bred an apolitical pietism, the revolution was received with mixed feelings. The Sandinistas' explicit commitment to ending discrimination stirred ethnic aspirations. But since few Pacific Coast Nicaraguans had even visited the Atlantic Coast they were culturally and ideologically ill-prepared to meet the complex of competing claims they had inherited.¹⁴

Conflicting approaches: ethnicity versus class

Initially, government priorities for the Coast were social and economic. To end its isolation 'roads were built; electricity and sanitation facilities were installed; health centres were established and campaigns against . . . prevalent diseases among us were carried out very successfully . . .'. Somoza-dominated industries such as mines, fishing and water transport

were nationalised, and the 'Sandinistas immediately provided life pensions to all widows of miners and began to improve the conditions in the mines'.¹⁵ However, much government intervention also altered traditional work, trading and land exploitation patterns, gratuitously, even malevolently, it seemed to many *costeños*. Some Moravian pastors saw the new social services as a threat to their role in the region. After years of isolation the high profile of the state raised issues of control and autonomy.¹⁶ Above all, ethnic sensibilities were wounded by the cultural ignorance and overtly racist attitudes of Mestizo government cadres.

Though popular participation was encouraged, the government assumed it would work through the Sandinista mass organisations. To *costeños*, however, these seemed an alien imposition and a rejection of their own popular organisations, which took ethnic, not sectoral interests as their point of departure. Though in urban communities there were observable class divisions, these were less evident in the rural areas; in any case, social difference was perceived in ethnic, not class terms.¹⁷ From the mid-1970s, three ethnic organisations had developed: the Miskitu ALPROMISU, the Sumu SUKAWALA, and the SICC for Creoles and Rama in the south.¹⁸

Hence the first Miskitu demand—for ALPROMISU to be recognised as the mass organisation representing all indigenous people—met with government incomprehension and insistence that ethnic problems would find their solution in economic development. By November 1979 however, the government was persuaded to recognise a new ethnic organisation, MISURASATA (a Miskitu acronym for 'Miskitu, Sumu, Rama and Sandinistas in Unity') to represent all indigenous groups, with rights equal to other mass organisations. Given responsibility for coordinating the mother-tongue Literacy Crusade during 1980, and appropriate logistical support, it was able to organise freely in the communities, and rapidly gained enthusiastic support.

Yet by August 1981 trust between the government and MISURASATA had broken down so completely that political negotiation became impossible. Steadman Fagoth (MISURASATA's elected representative in the Council of State), Brooklyn Rivera (MISURASATA coordinator on the Coast), and thousands of Miskitu had taken up arms against the government. Though opposition forces attributed this breakdown to Sandinista intransigence and determination to suppress ethnic cultures, both Rivera and Hazel Law (another founder-member, now North Atlantic's representative in the National Assembly), acknowledge from

their different positions the genuine opening to ethnic demands which MISURASATA created. For Law, 'within a contradictory but rich dynamic there were good things'; for Rivera, 'the Revolution made this whole movement possible . . . Before there was no incentive . . . we were just asleep'.¹⁹

The roots of the conflict lie in the radically different conceptions of ethnic rights held by the Sandinistas and MISURASATA, in their understanding of such terms as 'autonomy' and 'integration', and in the actions and interpretations to which they gave rise.

The Sandinistas recognised that ethnic minorities differed from other exploited classes by virtue of their double oppression due to class and race, but assumed they would be liberated through economic restructuring and full participation in a socialist democracy ('integration'). William Ramirez, then minister to the Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast (INNICA), encapsulated this position in his speech to a UN Seminar on Racial Discrimination (Managua, 1981):

The challenge . . . is to combat the racist ideology and forms of . . . discrimination which . . . form part of a world ideology that has its base in the socio-economic structure of world capitalism . . . By eliminating social classes, the Revolutionary Government will also eliminate the fundamental cause of racism and ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, racist ideology has an independent existence as well, which must be attacked on the ideological level.²⁰

MISURASATA, by contrast, drew its inspiration from the international indigenist movement, which rejected class-based analyses of ethnic oppression. It had burgeoned during the 1970s, impelled by frustration at the failure of government 'indigenist' policies and mainstream political parties to end Indian marginalisation. Central to its ideology was the principle of 'aboriginal' rights. Indigenous cultures, it argued, antedate the nation-states in which they are now inserted, which have distorted their inner dynamics and structures; their rights should thus take precedence over those of later social formations and non-indigenous groups. To assure the survival and development of their cultures ('autonomy'), indigenous peoples must unite supra-nationally as a 'Fourth World', to fight for the inalienable possession of their territories and resources.²¹

Neither position dealt adequately with Nicaragua's complexities. Sandinista ideology, forged in the nationalism of Latin American liberation struggles, could not encompass indigenous nationalism. At best, it was viewed as a primitive form of political awareness: freed from oppression, these cultures would develop a mature class consciousness.²²

For its part, the international indigenist perspective was ahistorical: it overlooked the ethnic complex produced by centuries of colonial manipulation and intermarriage between Indians and Creoles on the Coast, where 'individuals are no longer clearly definable ... racially, so much as by their cultural options (ethnically)'.²³ Indeed, though MISURASATA ostensibly represented all the indigenous groups, only the Miskitu leadership espoused the international indigenist position.²⁴

In Nicaragua, the potential for conflict between these two positions was exceptionally high. For *costeños*, the Sandinistas were historically stereotyped as the 'Spanish', their most overt colonisers. Hence, Sandinista notions of 'integration' appeared profoundly threatening. Yet the Sandinistas perceived themselves as liberators, casting Britain and the USA in the oppressor's role. Indeed the USA, seen as a benefactor by *costeños*, did objectively constitute the principal threat to the survival of the new state. Hence, indigenist notions of 'autonomy' were associated in Sandinista perceptions with the tradition of *costeño* separatism. As Ortiz points out: 'In principal, the right to self-determination includes the possibility of secession ... in reality such action on the part of a people within this conflict-ridden dynamic might be tantamount to dismantling the state ... and ... [be] seen as ... counter-revolutionary.'²⁵ Any genuine attempt to put principles into practice must bring the two ideologies into opposition, revealing their inherent contradictions.

The stages in this process are now well-documented, and will not be rehearsed in detail here.²⁶ They are, however, worth following through MISURASATA's three manifestos and government responses to them, which show rather clearly how historically conditioned expectations became apparently self-fulfilling, and attitudes hardened into non-negotiable positions.²⁷

MISURASATA's foundation manifesto (1979) made only cultural demands: 'recovery of our history'; 'diffusion of our language and culture'; collaboration in the literacy campaign, and 'learning Spanish which is the official language of the country'. These harmonised well with the conception of ethnic culture expressed the *Historic Programme* and elicited a positive response. By May 1980, mother-tongue adult literacy materials in Miskitu, Sumu and Creole were being prepared for a 'literacy crusade in languages', in collaboration with these groups. In the 1980 manifesto linguistic demands became bolder: Miskitu must be declared the 'second official language in the country, for it is the most

important language after Spanish'. In Nicaragua's multi-ethnic context this demand was contentious, and was not ratified in the legislation for bilingual-bicultural school education for all minority groups (December 1980).²⁸

Land claims were notably absent from the 1979 manifesto. But the blanket nationalisation of all lands carrying no titles of private ownership, followed by restrictions on timber felling under the forestry management policies of the new Environmental Resources Institute (IRENA), seemed to be deliberate attacks on the communal rights of Miskitu and Sumu, reviving memories of land seizures under Somoza. The 1980 manifesto thus enjoined the government to 'recognise and guarantee each indigenous community ownership of its territory. Titles should be duly registered into collective ownership that is continuous, inalienable and . . . geographically large enough to ensure the growth of the communities'. National interests in the subsoil were nevertheless recognised. Interpreting these claims as a matter of ratifying communal titles to land and use rights to resources, the government asked MISURASATA to prepare a full report on traditional claims and titles, and in July and August 1980 IRENA and INNICA agreed to pay fully for lumber cut on communal lands, and 80 per cent of its value on lands in dispute.²⁹

By early 1981 payments had not been made in full, and in MISURASATA's *Plan '81* land claims radicalised. 'An intensive consciousness-raising campaign' around the land survey issue was proposed. Fagoth and Rivera, competing for the personal power MISURASATA conferred, used work on the survey to revive hopes of a return to the old Miskitu hegemony. Rivera later recounted how 'older Miskitu sometimes talked of "working for the return of the king"'.³⁰ Before the survey was published, the government discovered that it would claim a continuous region comprising about one-third of national territory and its subsoil. Already nervous following disturbances in October among the Creoles of Bluefields,³¹ and the discovery that Fagoth had been a Somoza informer, the government took *Plan '81* and the survey as a separatist challenge, and arrested all the MISURASATA leaders to preempt the showdown they thought imminent. Mass demonstrations brought their rapid release. But in Prinzapolka the arrests had led to violence, with loss of both Sandinista and Miskitu lives. On his release, Fagoth departed with many followers for Honduras, and war.

Quite when he was coopted to the counter-revolution is much

debated.³² The issue is clouded by MISURASATA's contradictory position as an ethnic mass organisation. In encouraging its members to see their grievances in terms of ethnic prejudice, it tended to promote antagonism against the 'Spanish' state with which it needed to negotiate. Consequently, what the Sandinistas took to be normal negotiating practice was interpreted, honestly or manipulatively by different MISURASATA leaders, as hostile rejection. The result was an increasingly confrontational pattern of negotiation which compounded rather than resolved conflict.

Nevertheless, Fagoth's military organisation, MISURA, joined forces immediately with the *contra* FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Front), and no subsequent re-alignments altered that relationship.³³ This move completely disabled MISURASATA as a political negotiating body within Nicaragua. Events had apparently confirmed the Sandinistas' fears of separatism, and their resulting blanket suspicion of the Miskitu provoked many more, including Rivera, into taking up arms against them. The ensuing confusion of legitimate grievances with the *contra* war would take years to untangle.

Between 1981 and 1983, response to the conflict was largely military, as Miskitu and *contra* forces attacked communities, kidnapping and killing Miskitu who had worked with the revolution. They targeted development projects, halting and reversing socio-economic developments throughout the region. Moreover, the Sumu were dragged into a conflict they had sought to avoid, when their settlements around the strategic mining towns of Siuna, Bonanza and Rosita came under attack, and whole communities were kidnapped or forcibly recruited by MISURA forces.³⁴

In the later confirmed belief that *contra* strategy was to create a US-recognised liberated zone, the frontier was militarised: to this end, and to guarantee their safety, all River Coco communities were compulsorily relocated. Thousands fled to Miskitu territories on the Honduran side where they became trapped in refugee camps. Though resources were poured into the resettled communities of Tasba Pri, which enjoyed privileged economic development, this period marked the nadir of relations between the government and the Coast, and the height of international debate on ethnic rights in Nicaragua. Media images of an ethnocide government embarked on a policy of eradicating the indigenous peoples of the coastal areas were little affected by the unequivocal statements of reliable international observers that relocation was justified by the war, and was humanely carried out.³⁵

Negotiating conflict

Though the progression towards conflict had a certain tragic inexorability, its aftermath demonstrates the remarkable will to learn from it of many of the chief protagonists.

During 1983 Miskitu like Hazel Law, still convinced that the revolution provided the surest foundation for indigenous rights, sought out Sandinistas 'who understood what we were saying because of their own experience in the insurrection' and who 'listened to the people because we took them to the people'.³⁶ The war, and their work in the resettlements, brought government cadres into closer contact with all the minorities, teaching them 'to read beyond the way they put their demands to the social legitimacy of their content'.³⁷

The first stage was to recognise that fear, manipulation, and above all family loyalties had motivated a majority of those involved in the counter-revolution; a general amnesty was declared in 1983 for most Miskitu exiled or in prison, which is still in operation. A distinction was established between the *contras* of the Pacific Coast, with whom the government then refused to negotiate, and *alzados*, who bore arms in the legitimate pursuit of ethnic rights. These two measures formed the practical and conceptual basis for all subsequent efforts to meet the Coast's historic claims.

From late 1984, two interacting processes unfolded: exploration with ethnic minority leaders of their aspirations to autonomy, and peace negotiations, initially with Rivera. Autonomy was the *causus belli*, but without peace it was impossible. Since Rivera was acknowledged to be fighting for indigenous rights rather than against the state, it was important to involve him in political dialogue.

This foundered on two counts, the first of which was military. The government required a general ceasefire to guarantee safety for autonomy consultations, whereas Rivera insisted on maintaining his army to enforce agreements. His distrust is understandable. Nevertheless, his stance was difficult to distinguish from the US policy of maintaining *contra* armies to force Sandinista policy. Besides, by May 1985, his position had been undermined by grassroots action as *alzados* were persuaded by their communities of the credibility of the autonomy process. The local ceasefires agreed with these commanders set a pattern which quickly gained momentum.³⁸

The second problem was the ideological opposition between Rivera's commitment to 'aboriginal rights' and that of the government to a

multi-ethnic solution, 'a culmination of the revolution's . . . efforts to understand and respond to the historic developments in the region'.³⁹ After the first round of talks in December 1984, the government announced the establishment of a National Autonomy Commission to coordinate consultation with the communities, thus acknowledging the Miskitu demand for autonomy, but establishing a broader frame of reference than Rivera's. Expecting negotiations exclusively through MISURASATA, Rivera accused the government of preempting them, and refused the offer of a seat on the Commission.⁴⁰ In the government's conception, consultation must include all ethnic groups: quite apart from the difficulties of defining aboriginal rights, even for Sumu, Miskitu and Rama,⁴¹ MISURASATA was still a Miskitu-dominated organisation, with little real concern for the claims of the non-indigenous Creoles, Garifunas and Mestizos. Alleging Sandinista intransigence, Rivera abandoned the fourth round of talks (May 1985). He did not attempt to resume negotiations until 1988, when Nicaragua's autonomy law had been enacted, following two-and-a-half years of popular consultation.

Autonomy consultations

These consultations, rooted in Nicaragua's growing tradition of participatory democracy, provided a unique combination of theory and practice.⁴² During the Rivera negotiations, the National Autonomy Commission and two Regional Commissions took soundings among the minorities, and collated their findings into a set of draft autonomy principles. Simplified, illustrated versions of the principles were then produced in the Coast's four languages, and taken to the communities by trained local 'popular promoters'. On the basis of house-to-house and then sectoral consultations, the document went through several drafts before being submitted to the National Assembly.

However, people found it difficult to formulate a concept of autonomy: indeed, neither Miskitu nor Sumu had a word for it. Each ethnic group identified the notion with long-held aspirations, but had its own range of ideas. For the Miskitu it meant 'unity . . . peace . . . liberty . . . independence', for the Sumu 'their right . . . as an ethnic group . . . not to disappear . . . to have their communal lands guaranteed . . . to take charge of their own [education] programmes', whilst Creoles did not connect it with land, but with other forms of economic independence, such as trade with the Caribbean.⁴³

The idea gained grassroots credibility through practical demonstration rather than through words. For the Miskitu in the resettled villages and the Honduran refugee camps, autonomy meant returning to their River Coco villages, with peace agreements to make this possible. The return began in 1984: local *alzados* vouchsafed village security and the government coordinated logistical and economic support through a new Miskitu organisation, MISATAN (Organisation of Miskitu in Nicaragua). Despite constant attacks on the villages and great economic problems, this process began to build the mutual trust essential to developing autonomy.

In order to encourage *alzados* to negotiate, informal 'Dialogue for Peace Commissions' formed spontaneously in North Zelaya, which became so successful that in 1986 they were officially constituted as fully elected 'Peace and Autonomy Commissions'. These now operate in 90 per cent of communities, and have developed practices which will influence future autonomous institutions. They vary between communities, both in membership, which is ideologically pluralistic, and in what they undertake. This ranges from continued peace negotiations to 'responsibility for health and sanitation conditions, education, relations with the regional government, [and] investment priorities for the year'.⁴⁴

In 1986, two 'pilot autonomy projects', experiments in self-government, were set up and resourced in Miskitu, Sumu and Garifuna communities in North and South Zelaya. By handling for themselves such problems as land tenure and the management of resources, they explored empirically what autonomy could mean, and provided something akin to experimental evidence for other communities and the Autonomy Commissions.

The autonomy law

Though the consultation process has certainly influenced the content of the autonomy law, it would be misleading to suggest that it produced fundamental criticisms of its underlying principles, which indeed differ very little from the first draft. This indicates neither total grassroots support, nor that those principles were imposed and criticism suppressed. 'The attitude of coastal representatives appears to be that the principle of . . . their *right* to autonomy is the most important aspect, and that the terms . . . will develop through an organic process over time.'⁴⁵ The law is therefore formulated as a stage in this process.

Indeed, the multi-ethnic assembly in April 1987, where 220 representatives of all the ethnic groups ratified the final version, was remarkable for its efforts to keep the wording as permissive as possible, to be fleshed out in the elected regional councils constituted by the law.

The most radical criticisms of principle still come from outside Nicaragua. One important example is Rivera's alternative proposal, lodged with the UN in August 1987 and brought to negotiations with the Nicaraguan government in January 1988. Despite promising rapprochements, Rivera failed to attend the third round of these talks, scheduled for April 1988, and they remain in suspension. It is worth comparing his proposals with the Nicaraguan law, since their differences still inform international debate.⁴⁶

Nicaragua's law maintains in tension two principles: national indivisibility and the recognition of Nicaragua's multi-ethnic history. It guarantees the expression of ethnic identity to all groups without distinction. Since ethnic identity is conceived as a dynamic interaction with the world, it encompasses not only language, religion and customs, but also an adequate economic base for development, and political rights. The law therefore guarantees the inalienable right of communities to their lands, and use rights to their natural resources. All rights are invested in persons, as (self-defined) members of ethnic groups, not in territories, though for historical reasons rights are guaranteed within the Atlantic region. They will be exercised through freely elected community representatives in two regional councils, which can change the law by a two-thirds majority.

Rivera's proposals, by contrast, still assume aboriginal rights to a territory (whose new delineation excludes the mining zones and most areas of Mestizo population, but still incorporates much of the eastern half of Nicaragua). Indian peoples would have full jurisdiction over it except in external affairs. Until the territory became self-sufficient, its economy would be subsidised by central government, which would also fund its governing authorities and institutions. The form of these would be decided by a constitutional assembly representing all the Coast's communities, and ratified by a two-thirds majority of the adult population.

Nicaragua's principle of 'unity in diversity' sets narrower limits on autonomy, with less economic and juridical independence. For a region so undeveloped, and in a country still at war, these are realistic limitations. The law's multi-ethnic dynamic also falls short of Miskitu nationalist aspirations. Conversely, Rivera's commitment to 'aboriginal

new skills; others are from families who will live in the new houses, and who will earn a discount by working with the Cubans throughout the project.⁵³

In neither region are the elections seen in party political terms. Johnny Hodgson points out that in the south 'the people don't vote so much for a party as for individuals'.⁵⁴ Since only the FSLN so far has a real presence on the Coast, and is generally seen as the guarantor of autonomy, Hodgson predicts that FSLN candidates will win on their personal record.

In the north, the need is felt for a unified Miskitu organisation, to become the base for selecting non-party political candidates for national and regional election, as stipulated in the electoral legislation. Hazel Law explains that the peace process has brought into the communities many different positions on implementing autonomy: 'people who joined the peace dialogue . . . four years ago . . . two years ago . . . one year ago . . . have different ways of seeing the problematic', which could remain in unproductive conflict.⁵⁵ In her view 'the important thing here will be the selection of the candidates . . . not the formal ballot . . . People come together in an assembly, and argue it out'. A unified organisation would help ensure that both party and non-party candidates were genuine 'leaders who have been involved in the whole process of the organisations ever since people got the idea of an indigenous organisation to struggle for their rights', selected by popular acclaim and trusted in the communities.

Such a body, however, failed to materialise at a recent 'Miskitu Peace, Unity and Autonomy Assembly' held at Sisín (10–11 May 1989). The meeting convinced Law that 'we were too impatient . . . It has to be something much more cautious', such as 'a Council of Miskitu organisations . . . so that they will gradually come together through work'. It is certainly important that a productive dialectic should develop at this juncture, rather than sterile factional struggles for control of the Council and the autonomy process.

Future prospects

In 1984, a National Autonomy Commission member predicted: 'If it succeeds, it will set indigenous and other ethnic struggles ahead by twenty-five years. If it fails, or is made to fail, it will set those struggles back just as far.'⁵⁶ So far, the process has developed a dynamism that has resisted economic crisis, natural disaster and war. Which of these

enemies will be most dangerous in the future cannot be foreseen. The first two have already severely constrained progress, and will continue to do so. The last not only compounds economic problems; it tempts some indigenous leaders to evade negotiations altogether when they become difficult. Consequently, ideas important to the process remain outside it, mythologised and untried.

Even so, indigenous and ethnic minorities, especially in the Americas, see Nicaragua's process as a unique point of reference. As the Sandinista ideology has been enriched by engagement with international indigenism, so international indigenist organisations have learned from the experience of observing a government working out principles in a specific historical context. Organisations like the American Indian Movement (AIM) and WCIP, once deeply divided over Nicaragua, now accord it steady support, 'as a change in Central America which will open up the possibility of other changes in the situations of the indigenous nations'.⁵⁷

Notes

¹ For the best study of the origins and distribution of the Coast's peoples, see: Centre for Documentation and Research on the Atlantic Coast (CIDCA), *Demografía costeña. Notas sobre la historia demográfica y población actual de los grupos étnicos de la Costa Atlántica Nicaragüense*, Managua: CIDCA, 1982. Published in Miskitu as *Kus Uplika Nani Dukiura Stadi Munanka*, Managua: CIDCA, 1983. Summarised and updated in C R Hale and E T Gordon, 'Costeño demography: historical and contemporary demography of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast', in CIDCA, *Ethnic Groups and the Nation State: the case of the Atlantic Coast in Nicaragua*, Managua: CIDCA/Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1987. R Dunbar Ortiz summarises current opinion on the development of the Miskitu as a contact people: *Indians of the Americas: human rights and self-determination*, London: Zed Books, 1984, pp 202-8. M Helms' *Asang: adaptations to culture contact in a Miskito community*, Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1971, develops the thesis that 'It is virtually impossible to discuss any aspect of Miskitu life without recourse to the history of culture contact on the Coast' (p 228).

Variations in the spelling of Indian names are common, and are respected in all citations. This article observes spelling conventions based on the Miskitu and Sumu languages. Both have only three vowels: a, i and u, and form the plural by adding a word meaning 'many'. Hence, no plural suffix is used. The above spelling is correct for both the peoples and their languages.

² For details and discussion of accusations against the Government of National Reconstruction, see CIDCA, *Trábil Nani: historical background and current situation on the Atlantic Coast*, Managua: CIDCA, 1984, pp 4, 6, 8, 9, 26, 7, 47, 71.

³ Full translation in CIDCA, *Ethnic Groups*, p 70. Its title, 'Reincorporation of the Atlantic Coast', signals its limitations. Three of its five aims are economic: to 'put an end to the criminal exploitation suffered by the Atlantic Coast throughout its history', to 'develop agriculture and cattle-raising . . . the fishing and forestry industries'; one is cultural: to 'encourage the flowering of the local cultural values of the region which derive from the original aspects of its historical tradition; and one anti-racist: 'to put a stop to the odious discrimination against the native Miskitu, Sumu, Sambos, and blacks'. ('Sambo' or 'zambo' was the official Spanish caste system

designation for the offspring of an Indian mother and an African father', now considered offensive by those peoples. See R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, p 263. The *Historic Programme* was elaborated into the 1981 *Declaration of Principles of the Sandinista Popular Revolution with regard to the Indigenous Communities of the Atlantic Coast*, translated in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution and Indigenous Identity: the conflict between Sandinistas and Miskitu Indians on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast*, Copenhagen: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), 1983, pp 178-80.

⁴ For a preliminary attempt, see J Freeland, *A Special Place in History: the Atlantic Coast in the Nicaraguan Revolution*, London: War on Want/Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 1988, pp 15-31.

⁵ R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, pp 230-1.

⁶ For fuller treatments of Atlantic Coast history, see *ibid*, pp 191-276; C R Hale, 'Inter-ethnic relations and class structure in Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast', and C Vilas, 'Revolutionary change and multi-ethnic regions', both in ЧУХА, *Ethnic Groups*, pp 7-57, 61-100; J Freeland, *A Special Place in History*, pp 15-31.

⁷ On the Miskitu monarchy, see M Helms, 'The cultural ecology of a colonial tribe', *Ethnology* 8, 1969, pp 79-80.

⁸ 'Los afro-nicaragüenses (creoles) y la revolución', *Want* 4, 1986, pp 7-9. Where no author is cited, articles have been published collectively.

⁹ J L Alegret, 'La Comarca de Cabo Gracias a Dios: Apuntes para su historia', *Encuentro* 24-25, 1985, p 67. For details of the development of the Creole ascendancy, see C Dekalb, 'Nicaragua: studies on the Mosquito shore in 1892', *Journal of American Geographical Society of New York* 25, 1892, p 271; L Rossbach and V Wunderlich, 'Derechos indígenas y estado nacional en Nicaragua: la convención mosquita de 1894', *Encuentro* 24-25, 1985, pp 34-6. By 1890, if not before, Creoles completely dominated the government of the reserve.

¹⁰ For accounts of the impact of the enclaves on two different Miskitu communities, see M Helms, *Asang*, pp 110-57, and B Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water: the subsistence ecology of the Miskito Indians, Eastern Nicaragua*, New York: Semmar Press, 1973, pp 42-4.

¹¹ Epilogue (anonymous) to G Grossman, *La Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua*, Managua: Ministerio de Cultura, 1988, pp xvi-xvii, xxi-xxviii. This is a collection of writings by a Moravian missionary on the Coast, 1908-38, originally published in German in 1940. M Helms, *Asang*, appendix B, pp 239-50, gives an account of the Moravian Brotherhood and its impact on Miskitu culture.

¹² R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, p 212. For the traditional view see M Helms, *Asang*, pp 41, 112-14, 145. J Jenkins, *El desafío indígena en Nicaragua: el caso de los miskitos*, Managua: Vanguardia, 1986, pp 115-72, gives a positive account. J Román, *Maldito país*, Managua: Editorial Unión, 1983, pp 103-4 records Sandino's famous promise: 'This too is Nicaragua . . . as soon as the war of independence is over . . . I will stay here on the River Coco . . . [to] free it from the barbarism into which first feudal colonialism, and now capitalist exploitation have plunged it. To do everything possible to civilise these poor Indians who are the core of our race.' Román records his travels with Sandino along the River Coco in February and March 1933, meeting *costeños* who had worked with him after the ceasefire agreement and the withdrawal of the US Marines.

Costeño is the name used by and for people of the Atlantic Coast region of all ethnic groups including Mestizos.

¹³ M Helms, *Asang*, pp 221-2. 'In 1916, responsibility for the [Moravian] mission was transferred from Germany to the United States . . . Since that time, US funding and staff have been responsible for the majority of the educational and health facilities in the region.' From 1974 onwards, Creole and Miskitu lay pastors replaced the US missionaries (ЧУХА, *Trubil Nani*, p 13).

¹⁴ Manuel Calderón, first military commander of North Zelaya, put the problem frankly: 'When I graduated from high school, I thought all there was on the Atlantic Coast was Bluefields. I didn't even know Puerto Cabezas existed, or the mines . . . because in school we never learned anything about the Atlantic Coast . . . The truth is that we never tried to do any political work among the miners because we didn't think we were strong enough. There were only three of us working in the area . . . We couldn't go into a *barrio*, work alongside the people, have meetings, discuss their problems and their demands' (interviewed for the US Trotskyist weekly *Intercontinental Press*, 19 June 1981, reprinted in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, p 149).

- ¹³ Interview with Reynaldo Reyes, who signed a ceasefire with the government in 1985, by R Dunbar Ortiz, *The Miskito Indians of Nicaragua*, London: Minority Rights Group, 1988, p. 7. See also CIDCA, *Trabaja Nani*, pp. 18–21, 56–71.
- ¹⁴ R D Ortiz points out (*Miskito Indians*, p. 7) that, though for the first time a Ministry for the Atlantic Coast (INNICA) and a research and documentation centre (CIDCA) were established, the key appointments to both were from Managua.
- ¹⁵ See P Bourgois: 'The problematic of Nicaragua's indigenous minorities', in T W Walker (ed), *The Nicaraguan Revolution*, New York: Praeger, 1981, pp. 313–15, and J Freeland, *A Special Place in History*, pp. 33–5.
- ¹⁶ See C Vilas' analysis of ethnic organisation on the Coast: 'Revolutionary change', pp. 67–9. ALPROMISU (1974–89): Alliance for the Progress of Miskitu and Sumu. Founded with US missionary and peace corps support in response to Somoza Forestry Commission encroachments on Miskitu lands. Initially repressed, its leadership was later coopted by Somoza. Dormant in 1978, it was revived by Miskitu students in Managua, with a view to developing indigenous rights through the revolution. (For fuller accounts from different positions see R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, p. 214; L. Carrión, 'The truth about the Atlantic Coast' in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp. 249–50; J Jenkins, *El desafío indígena*, pp. 256–9.) SUKAWALA (1974–82, 1985–present): Nicaraguan Association of Sumu Communities. Originated in the mining area communities, sponsored by Capuchin missionaries and the Evangelical Committee for Aid to Development (CEPAD). Before the revolution, carried out small-scale literacy and agricultural development programmes. Not active in international indigenist organisations, nor coopted by Somoza. Though involved in MISURASATA, the Sumu feared Miskitu control, and SUKAWALA continued to meet and negotiate with the government. Formally recognised in 1985 to represent the Sumu in the autonomy process (see J Jenkins, *El desafío indígena*, pp. 252–6). SICC (1977 present): Southern Indigenous and Creole Community. Founded to promote cultural and social interests of Creoles; not incorporated into MISURASATA in 1979, since it had different aims; in 1980 organised strikes and demonstrations against Cuban medical and social workers. The name, taken over by Creoles who joined the *contras*, occasionally appeared linked with Rivera's organisations. (See P Bourgois, 'Nicaragua's indigenous minorities', p. 317, note 14; E. Gordon, 'History, identity, consciousness, revolution: Afro-Nicaraguans and the Nicaraguan revolution', in CIDCA, *Ethnic Groups*, p. 140.)
- ¹⁷ H Law, interviewed in *Envío*, Managua: Instituto Histórico Centroamericano, 7(87), September–October 1988, p. 24; B Rivera, interviewed 11 January 1984 by P Bourgois, 'Ethnic minorities', in T W Walker (ed), *Nicaragua Five Years On*, New York: Praeger, p. 211. See also Reynaldo Reyes: 'we were given a lot of power, resources, and autonomy', (R D Ortiz, *Miskito Indians*, p. 7).
- ¹⁸ Full translation in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp. 218–34.
- ¹⁹ Class-based and ethnicist analyses of ethnic rights are compared in R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, pp. 75–109, and in her case-study of Nicaragua (chapter 4). She points out the 'virtual denial of discussion' in the Americas until relatively recently, and the consequent poverty of analysis, and emphasises that class divisions have been 'vital in the Miskitu socio-economic history and reality' since the establishment of their monarchy (p. 205). Steadman Fagoth, interviewed by the Managua independent daily *Nuevo Diario*, 19 October 1980, uses a mixed discourse, describing the indigenist movement as 'proletarian and semi-proletarian' (in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp. 73–8).
- ²⁰ See, for instance, Manuel Calderón's *Intercontinental Press* interview, and William Ramírez's 1981 speech to the UN seminar on racial segregation (K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp. 143–4, 228).
- ²¹ Centro de Investigación y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria (CITERA). *La Musquitia en la Revolución*, Managua: Colección Real Espinales, 1981, p. 102.
- ²² The Sumu, whose history is one of resistance to assimilation by the Miskitu, found their nationalism very threatening. See 'Los indígenas sumos de la Costa Atlántica: definen su propia realidad', *Envío* 5(57), March 1986, pp. 1b–13b, and interview with the Sumu leader Murphy Alendáriz, *Pensamiento Propio*, Managua: Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) 4(32), April 1986, pp. 14–16. Both discuss the Sumu desire for something approaching a reserve, to protect them from such encroachment.
- ²³ 'The Creoles/revolution contradiction has not been played out at the level of abstract ideas

or conflicting political philosophies ... [but] as a consequence of Creole experience of and reaction to the concrete manifestations of these ideas and philosophies.' In particular, their hopes were not fulfilled of being reinstated 'in the hegemonic political and economic positions which they had progressively lost since the Reincorporation, and which they thought were rightfully theirs' (E Gordon, 'History, identity', pp 145, 149).

²⁵ R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, p 77. On the Sandinista fear of autonomy, note William Ramirez: 'In 1981, we were afraid to speak of autonomy because we didn't understand ... the Atlantic Coast' (quoted in 'Autonomy for the Atlantic Coast: a new principle of the revolution', *Envío* 4(45), March 1985, p 2h).

²⁶ See works cited in note 3; also 'From separatism to autonomy—ten years on the Atlantic Coast', *Envío* 8 (93), April 1989, and interviews by Douglas Carcache with ex-MISURASATA leaders Uriel Vanegas and Hazel Law, *Envío*, September–October 1988, pp 11–32.

²⁷ 1979: 'Together we will build a just society', communiqué published in *Barricada*, 27 November 1979, 1980: *Lineamientos Generales* ('General Principles'), 500 copies published in Managua; 1981: *Plan of Action 1981*, minutes of MISURASATA's executive council, December 1980. English translations in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp 38–41, 48–63, 89–94. The 1980 *Lineamientos* is misdated 1982 in the text, but not in the bibliography.

²⁸ Government of National Reconstruction (IGNR), 'Law on education in indigenous languages on the Atlantic Coast', first published in *La Gaceta* 84(279), 3 December 1980, in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp 79–83.

²⁹ ININCA, IRENA, MISURASATA, 'Agreement on norms for lumber felling', first published in *Barricada*, 14 February 1981, in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp 95–9. On the conflicts with Somoza, see R D Ortiz, *Miskito Indians*, p 6.

³⁰ P Bourgois, 'Ethnic minorities', p 207. See Rivera's inflammatory speech to the Rama Indians, 'An Indian without land is not an Indian', and the *Barricada* report (15 February 1981) of a MISURASATA demonstration 'where tempers flew, and they demanded the expulsion of all Sandinistas, Creoles and Mestizos, reaching the extreme of falsely claiming for themselves the heritage of the whole Atlantic Coast' (K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, pp 64–8, 113).

³¹ Details in E Gordon, 'History, identity', pp 146–53, and J Freeland, *A Special Place in History*, pp 44–50.

³² One ESLN view was that 'the actions of MISURASATA after the triumph was [sic] the product of a coldly calculated and designed policy by Yankee imperialism' (Luis Carrón, speech to Latin American intellectuals, March 1982, in K Ohland and R Schneider, *National Revolution*, p 253). Fagoth himself stated in a *Miami Herald* interview published on 3 August 1981, that 'on January 16 [1981] we took the decision to declare open war against Sandinismo' (CINCA, *Trábil Nani*, p 18). For details of his use by the US media and administration, see the report of the International Justice Fund, *Role of the Nicaraguan and the United States Governments in the Relocation of the Miskito Indians and Subsequent Developments on the Atlantic Coast*, pp 10–13, December 1984.

³³ Fagoth named his armed organisation MISURA, deleting the Sandinista reference from the acronym MISURASATA; Brooklyn Rivera retained the original name. R D Ortiz, *Miskito Indians*, p 14, note 17 summarises later transformations and re-alignments of Miskito armed organisations.

³⁴ H P Buvollen, 'The Sumus: victims of the war in Nicaragua', *INCA Yearbook*, 1988, pp 67–72.

³⁵ Quotation from Freedom House Report, February 1982, *The Indigenous Peoples of Nicaragua's Eastern Coast: their treatment by the junta of national reconstruction* (mimeo) p 2. For discussion of the human rights issues relating to Miskito relocations, see R D Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, pp 251–5; International Justice Fund, *Role of the Nicaraguan and US Governments*, pp 14–42.

³⁶ Hazel Law, interview, *Envío*, September–October 1988, pp 26–9.

³⁷ Tomás Borge, interviewed in *Barricada Internacional* special supplement 3, September 1988.

³⁸ On negotiating local agreements, see 'Separatism to autonomy', *Envío*, April 1989, p 39. On conflicting pressures on Rivera, see 'The Atlantic Coast: war or peace?', *Envío* 4(52), October 1985, pp 5c–10c; H Law, interview, *Envío*, September–October 1988, pp 28–30. At the 'Iran-Contra' hearings in 1987 Robert Owen's testimony revealed that Rivera was suborned to abandon the talks: 'The idea was that if he went to the talks with the Sandinistas and then walked out, we were going to help him', 'La paz en la Costa: preludio de esquipulas II', *Envío* 6(77), November 1987, p 43.

³⁹ 'Autonomy—a new principle', *Envío*, March 1985, p 1b.

- ⁴⁰ Central American Historical Institute (CAHI), *Update* 7(6), 29 February 1988, p. 7.
- ⁴¹ 'These are issues that have deadlocked international organisations since the creation of the League of Nations: the United Nations as a body has yet to . . . accept a definition of "peoples".' The concept of original rights 'would be very ticklish on the Atlantic Coast, since wide-flung Sumu placenames indicate that the Sumu . . . displaced by the Miskitu . . . once occupied a much larger territory than they do now', ('Separatism to Autonomy', *Envío*, April 1989, pp 37, 41).
- ⁴² For contemporary accounts of the process, see 'Autonomy --a new principle', *Envío*, March 1985, pp 1b-4b; J Butler, 'Autonomía para la Costa: ni magia ni tabú', CIDCA, *Wani* 2-3, 1985, pp 6-13; J Butler, 'Proyectos pilotos de autonomía zonal', *Wani* 4, July-September 1986; 'Nicaragua: conversaciones sobre la autonomía' [interviews with delegates to the International Symposium on Autonomy and Indigenous Rights, Managua, July 1986], *Pensamiento Propio* 4(36), 1986, pp 4-14; 'Constitution recognises rights of Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua', CAHI *Update* 2, 9 January 1987; H Díaz-Polanco, 'Un debate internacional: la autonomía para los grupos étnicos', *Wani* 5, January-April 1987, pp 55-70; 'La paz en la Costa', *Envío*, November 1987, pp 40-8; 'Peace process advances on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast', CAHI *Update*, 14 September 1987; 'The Atlantic Coast - peace has taken hold', *Envío* 7(83), May 1988, pp 36-55; J Freeland, *A Special Place in History*, pp 65-79.
- ⁴³ Myrna Cunningham, interviewed by J Freeland *et al.*, March 1987.
- ⁴⁴ 'Peace has taken', *Envío*, May 1988, pp 47-8. On the return to the River Coco, and the work of the Peace and Autonomy Commissions, see 'War or Peace?', *Envío*, October 1985; 'The Miskitos on the Rio Coco: whose political football are they?', *Envío* 5(59), May 1986, pp 1b-30b; R D Ortiz, 'Indigenous rights and regional autonomy in revolutionary Nicaragua', *Latin American Perspectives* 14(1), winter 1987, pp 52-3.
- ⁴⁵ D Ortiz, *Miskito Indians*, p. 9. Criticism was robust, and was well reported in *Barricada*, the government newspaper, in *Barricada Internacional*, published worldwide in several languages, and in *Sunrise*, the Bluefields-based bilingual newspaper.
- ⁴⁶ This discussion is based on the text of Nicaragua's autonomy law, in J Freeland, *A Special Place in History*, pp 111-21, and its analysis pp 87-90; G Gudián, 'Autonomy rights, national unity and national liberation: the autonomy project of the Sandinista popular revolution on the Atlantic Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua', *Ethnic Groups*, pp 171-89; R D Ortiz, *Miskito Indians*, pp 9-12. For an account of Rivera's 1988 negotiations, see 'Peace has taken', *Envío*, May 1988, p 48-53.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p 48.
- ⁴⁸ YATAMA ('Mother Earth'), is the latest of the many regroupings of Miskitu armed organisations which Rivera claims to represent. He always emphasises its links with MISURASATA.
- ⁴⁹ Hence Myrna Cunningham's statement that 'A year after having established the autonomy law, people still don't really know what it means', *Barricada Internacional* special no 3, September 1988, p. 1. On the electoral law, see 'Nueva ley electoral: regulando el pluralismo político', *Envío* 7(88), pp 31-40. It provides for candidates to stand for election to the Regional Councils on a non-party ticket, when 'through particular ethnic interests or because of a lack of consonance between local municipal issues and national government, [citizens] do not feel themselves to be represented by any of the political parties or coalitions.' To be eligible for selection, candidates must have the support of 1 per cent of the electors of the ward (circunscripción) for which they will stand. To be selected, they need the supporting signatures of 10 per cent of those registered in that ward (p 37, my translation).
- ⁵⁰ 'Organizing on the Rio Coco', *Envío* 8(91), February 1989, pp 7-9; 'Peace has taken', *Envío*, May 1988, pp 53-4. Unless otherwise attributed, quotations in the following paragraph are from the latter source.
- ⁵¹ Johnny Hodgson, coordinator of the Regional Autonomy Commission, quoted in 'Reconstructing autonomy', *Barricada Internacional*, 19 January 1989, p. 13.
- ⁵² Johnny Hodgson, interviewed by J Freeland, Bluefields, 8 June 1989; see also 'Blueprint for an autonomous government', *Barricada Internacional*, 17 June 1989, p. 11.
- ⁵³ See 'Bluefields, picking up the pieces', *Barricada Internacional*, special no 4, November 1988, pp 2-3; C Taylor, 'To build a better Bluefields', *Barricada Internacional*, Managua, 6 December 1988, p. 6; 'Hard work and high winds', *Barricada Internacional*, 19 January 1989, pp 13, 15; 'Pearl Lagoon: back from war and winds', *Envío* 8(92), March 1989; *Sunrise*, Bluefields, 62, April 1989, pp 1-3; *Sunrise Information Bulletin*, 26 April 1989; features in *Barricada Internacional*, 17 June 1989, pp 11-14.

⁵⁴ 'Blueprint', *Barricada Internacional*, 17 June 1989, p 11.

⁵⁵ Interviewed by J Freeland, Managua, 4 June 1989. Unless otherwise attributed, quotations in this and the following paragraph are from this interview.

⁵⁶ Quoted in 'Separatism to autonomy', *Envío*, April 1989, p 41.

⁵⁷ Donald Rojas Maroto, president of the WCIP, interviewed at its fifth general assembly, Lima, Peru, 1987, *IWGIA Yearbook* 1987, p 114. Both organisations publicly repudiated members who in 1986 became involved with Rivera in an international campaign against Sandinista policies which jeopardised their organisations' diplomatic role. See *IWGIA Yearbook* 1987, pp 105, 109-114, and J Freeland, *A Special Place in History*, p 104. These developments will make it more difficult for indigenous and foreign politicians to manipulate such organisations in the future. In August 1988, the second Congress of Indigenous Deputies was held in Managua, and in recognition of the achievements of autonomy Nicaragua was selected as the permanent seat of the secretariat of the new indigenous parliament established at the congress (*Barricada Internacional*, 8 September 1988, p 9).

Glasnost and the nationalities within the Soviet Union

The difficult processes of democratisation in Soviet society have created both an increase in inter-ethnic strife and, in many respects, a crisis in overall nationality policy, however paradoxical this may seem. This situation threatens the very existence of the Soviet Union as one single unit.

The population of the USSR was around 286,717,000 on 12 January 1989, and it is one of the most multi-ethnic states in the world. Although the last census data on the ethnic composition of the population have not yet been published, there are believed to be at present about 128 ethnic groups (peoples).

The following data on the largest groups (those of over 1 million) were calculated by Soviet demographers in mid-1985.

Table 1

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>In</i> <i>thousands</i>	<i>percentage</i>	<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>In</i> <i>thousands</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Russians	143,500	51.73	Turkmenians	2,400	0.87
Ukrainians	43,500	15.68	Kirghiz	2,240	0.81
Uzbeks	14,800	5.34	Germans	2,000	0.72
Byelorussians	9,760	3.52	Chuvash	1,790	0.65
Kazakhs	7,470	2.69	Jews	1,750	0.63
Tatars	6,600	2.38	Bashkirs	1,470	0.53
Azerbaijanis	6,270	2.26	Latvians	1,445	0.52
Armenians	4,580	1.65	Mordvians	1,140	0.41
Georgians	3,800	1.37	Poles	1,140	0.41
Tajiks	3,450	1.24	Estonians	1,030	0.37
Moldavians	3,165	1.14	Other peoples	11,115	4.00
Lithuanians	2,985	1.08			

Source: *Peoples of the World: a historical and ethnographic reference book*, Moscow: Nauka, 1988, p 543.

The full results of the January 1989 census will not present us with a significant change in the overall ethnic structure of the population of the USSR. Undoubtedly, all the major groups are increasing numerically, especially in Central Asia, whereas some other peoples, especially those in the Baltic region, remain more or less static and others, such as the Jews, Germans, Mordvins and the peoples of the Far North (northern Siberia) are decreasing. Contrary to predictions and official

statements, the populations of most republics are becoming more ethnically homogeneous in favour of the titular (or indigenous) nationalities.

The Slavic peoples retain their majority status but the Russians are close to forming 50 per cent of the population. Not a single people has disappeared from the ethnic map; on the contrary, instead of the 101 peoples registered in the 1979 census, greater democracy in the present procedures has 'revealed' more than twenty 'new' peoples.

The legacy of empire and new historical challenges

The multi-ethnic composition of the population of the USSR was inherited from the Russian Empire which preceded it and which was formed over several centuries. It originated at the turn of the fourteenth century when the Russian Great Principality of Moscow began to expand its frontiers in all directions. In the fifteenth century it embraced the northern-European region of the country and part of the Volga region and from the sixteenth century the rest of the Volga and Ural regions after the fall of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan. Russians started to move into Siberia at that time. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries all regions of Siberia, the Kuban steppes and several other regions north of the Caucasus were incorporated into Russia. Between the seventeenth and eighteenth century the Ukraine, the Baltic regions and Byelorussia were joined to Russia, followed in the nineteenth century by several other regions in the North Caucasus, Transcaucasia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (except for the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara).¹

The immense territory of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century incorporated peoples who were very different from each other in size, level of development, language, culture, physical traits, religion and other features.² This ethnic situation was referred to rather laconically as 'the prison-house of nations', in a manner characteristic of Tsarist Russia. This attitude was primarily a response to the extreme backwardness of social and economic development perceived in the outlying national regions, but also derived from the 'Great Power' Russian chauvinist policies pursued by Tsarism towards the non-Russian population. The revolution in Russia occurred at the very time in history when there was a rapid development of nationalist movements in the empire, which included those with separatist inclinations desiring the creation of independent states for the relatively larger peoples in the outlying national regions. After the Tsarist government was over-

thrown in February 1917, the Provisional Government recognised Polish independence and then issued a decree for the autonomy of the Ukraine. In Transcaucasia, with the departure of the demobilised sections of the Russian army, independent national states were formed in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia which continued to exist until 1920-21. In the years of civil war there arose many autonomous republics in the Russian federation which were recognised and supported by Soviet power at the centre. In 1918-20 a complicated process for the creation of independent governments in the Baltic region (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) took place. In 1917 the government of the Russian Federation recognised the independence of Finland. In this way, from 1917-21, before the USSR was officially proclaimed, Soviet power did not so much 'create' states with national governments but rather had to recognise them either as socialist within the framework of the Soviet government or as bourgeois beyond its borders. However, the advancement of the principle of the right to national self-determination by Lenin and the Bolshevik party in their national policy statements (even to the extent of allowing the creation of independent states) undoubtedly gave an advantage to their struggle for power. It made victory much easier over their opponents who, as a rule, advocated the 'unity' and 'indivisibility' of Russia and were against federalisation.

This new political strategy (until 1917 Lenin, having foreseen the possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia, had declared himself against the application of federative forms of state system) finally resulted in the possibility of preserving nearly all the territories of Tsarist Russia with its many nationalities, but under the aegis of a new revolutionary state (except for Poland, the Baltic and Finland). The declaration of the principle of 'socialist federalism' in terms of administrative-governmental divisions according to national (ethnic) boundaries formed a basis for the building of the Soviet Union and is allegedly preserved to the present day. The 1977 Constitution of the USSR which is still in force in fact preserves Stalin's Constitution of 1936, since it is derived from the view that 'the composition of the USSR is not made of geographical regions and administrative units but of nation-states.'³ In this case it means that fifteen union republics are subjects of a federation. These national-governmental formations at the primary (highest) level also contain another 38 national-territorial formations at three different levels (mostly within the Russian republic): 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous regions and 10 autonomous districts. In this manner, nearly all the peoples of the USSR (around 98

per cent of the total population) have their own national governments in one form or another. A few dozen peoples, however, including some sizeable ones, in particular those whose majority lives outside the borders of the USSR, have no governmental form of their own, or did have one but were deprived of it under Stalin (2 million Soviet Germans; 1.2 million Poles; 410,000 Koreans; 370,000 Bulgarians; 350,000 Greeks; 185,000 Gypsies; 185,000 Gauguzi; 175,000 Hungarians; 400,000 Crimean Tatars and others).

The fundamental and noble concept of the rights of nations to self-determination, with the policies deriving from it, had its origins in Europe where it was already diffused by the first half of the nineteenth century. It formed part of the 'bourgeois-democratic' reforms for the recognition of the 'national principle' (the right of a nation to its own sovereign government). In seventy years of Soviet rule this idea underwent a complicated metamorphosis. As a formality this principle was proclaimed in all the Soviet Constitutions and it is still proclaimed to be a main condition for the free development of the peoples and for guaranteeing the preservation of the Union. As Mikhail Gorbachev said in his speech to the party conference in June 1988: 'One of the greatest achievements of socialism was the establishment in our country of the union of nations and peoples with equal rights. This allows us today to say with great assurance that henceforth also the healthy basis for our development can only be the consistent practice of Lenin's nationality policy.'

In reality, however, the rigid command administrative system established in the 1920s and 1930s, with its vertical bureaucratic structures and omnipotent centre that has still not been destroyed, has transformed the country from a federal to what is, in practice, a unitary state. Instead of the provision of collective rights of peoples to the preservation and development of their culture and their interests as citizens stipulated by their ethnic affiliation, at central and republican levels throughout the country some prestigious attributes of power and forms of culture were established which have probably only had the function of demonstrating externally the high and flourishing status of 'Soviet nations'. At the same time Stalin's regime allowed completely arbitrary and real genocide towards whole peoples: the abolition of national autonomy, the organisation of violent deportations of whole peoples and the practice of mass repression (by means of executions and camps). Although complex conditions prevailed on the eve of World War II, it was nevertheless through scheming and military might

that the independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was abolished and that they were incorporated into the USSR in 1940. After the death of Stalin, rigid centralism and strong-hand methods in the nationality policy of the country (although now without mass repression) were preserved virtually until the mid-1980s. In this way, the unity of the USSR throughout its existence has been based not on constitutional and legal principles but on other factors which are paradoxically opposed to each other. On the one hand, there was the belief of people in the socialist ideal, the strength and unity of the political system. On the other hand, there were the limitations on democracy and popular will made by a centralist administrative system and openly totalitarian forms of rule which endured over a quite a long period. Both these principles are beginning to falter thanks to the new conditions provided by the democratisation of public life throughout the USSR, the growth of pluralism and elements of self-development and the growth of national consciousness and political activity. Yet although Soviet theoreticians and politicians, including those in the highest echelons of power, have still not recognised this fully, it is important to look now for a new basis on which the Soviet Union should be built. Instead of declarative announcements (containing hidden threats) that the peoples of our country have already 'made their socialist choice once and for ever', it seems vital that new principles should be formulated. These should represent the permanent right of peoples to choose the social and state system that provides them with the best conditions for their own social existence. From here must stem the main policy aim of the party and the state in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations: it should not be 'to strengthen the unity of the Union and friendship of the peoples' but rather to provide, on the basis of recognised and voluntary unification, the most favourable conditions possible for existence at both the collective and individual level.

I am convinced that the process of democratisation will lead us in the last resort to a sane not a sterile understanding of the right to self-determination. Moreover, it is possible to assume that one or more of the Soviet peoples will decide to implement this principle, all the way to secession. On account of this, the federation should work out a democratic procedure for it. The principle of preservation, 'to keep and not to let go', cannot function in a government of law, nor can it be acted upon through the use of tanks since there would never be a sufficient number of them, even if every tank was brought back from the countries of Eastern Europe. It is precisely here that the irony of the

situation lies: the democratisation of our civil society on the lines of strengthening the 'national governments' of the inhabitants of this land even to the extent of Balkanising the USSR should really be seen to be a historical step backwards, since this would contradict the overall tendencies of world development at the end of the twentieth century. It might be, however, that a return to that stage of history, which many European peoples lived through in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, or that was desired by the peoples of former colonial empires in the first half of the twentieth century, cannot be avoided here in order to 'pay the debts' of the old Russian monarchy and Stalin's policies.

It is not easy to accept the sad truth that for the peoples residing on one-sixth of the Earth (the USSR), the twentieth century has mostly been a time of failed experiments and lost opportunities. But to enter the coming new millenium, should we take a step back to the nineteenth century -to the times of nationalism and the collapse of old empires— or should we consider and act in an alternative way and respond to the opportunity of keeping the Union as a single state? This is a major dilemma now facing the USSR and the answer is 'blowing in the wind', but it seems to me that a way out of the situation can be found by seeking a path towards new approaches and a new policy which would take into account the realities of the end of the twentieth century in other parts of the world. One essential point in assessing the realities to use in this debate is that the principle of 'national states' has never historically been fully realised. Moreover, in the multi-national (or multi-ethnic) states in which the majority of people live, the attempt to construct administrative divisions along ethnic boundaries has proved difficult to fulfil. In some cases this has derived from a combination of factors such as the increased intermixing of people of different origin, the development of economic ties, and sometimes the establishment of overall democratic civil rights. In the contemporary world, people can at times be seen to preserve their integrity and distinctiveness and promote the aims of their own culture much more frequently and successfully precisely because of the variety of forms of national and cultural autonomy, through the development of regional and local self-government, through overall state policies for the success of the economy and the perfecting of social and political forms of organisation.

We have to admit that today, in the rest of the world, the principle of the right of a single ethnic group within a state to self-determination, over and above the rights of common citizenship, has nearly dis-

appeared. The principle of national self-determination, however, has sometimes to be discussed at an international level, such as in the documents of the United Nations and in other international declarations and charters, in order to address former dependent peoples in the colonies and those people who are deprived of or are still struggling for independence and sovereignty.

Finally, there have been changes in the very nature of ethnic communities. There, the sign of difference is becoming less dependent on a given territory, especially on the integrity of borders within which citizens live, less dependent on exclusive economic ties and even language. Self-awareness is becoming increasingly significant. Faced with this evidence, there are anachronisms evident in Soviet terminology and understanding and which are used as the basis of much political and governmental practice. It is not by chance that one foreign scholar accused Soviet ethnologists and anthropologists of holding positions which coincided with those of official ethnologists in South Africa.⁴

Failed concepts and definitions

I shall begin by examining some concepts in Soviet literature that are far from clear, and which inaccurately reflect historical and contemporary reality. The statement that there are over 100 nations and *narodnost*⁵ in the USSR reflects the dubious practice of dividing ethnic entities into three groups – *plemya* (tribe), *narodnost* (people) and *natsiya* (nation). Even when these terms are used according to Marx and Engels' historical schema to denote the levels of stadial development of an ethnic entity (*plemya* at the pre-class level of social development, *narodnost* at the pre-bourgeois level, and *natsiya* in the bourgeois and socialist stages of development) they raise many questions that require further analysis. It is particularly difficult to condone the practice of dividing ethnic entities into nations and *narodnost* whose criteria depend solely on whether they have the political structure of their own Union Republic and autonomous republic or have lesser status or no status at all. After all, it is impossible today to make a distinction in principle between a nation and *narodnost* even on the basis of population size, not to mention structural, socio-economic and cultural characteristics. The neutral terms 'peoples' or 'nationalities' of the USSR which are also sometimes used in official documents, including the Constitution, are more accurate and appropriate. Such terms eliminate the unnecessary contradictions and perplexity which arise when some citizens

are relegated to bearing the label of an ethnic entity of a less significant category than the majority of the population.

But what about such a fundamental term as 'nation'? I think it is no accident that the long-standing discussion about its definition has been of little use. Our social scientists are still trying to find a new definition to replace the one which originated from Stalin's definition but which is still dominant in official ideology and scientific literature—that a nation is an 'ethnosocial organism'⁶ or a 'historical entity of people in the period of formation and development of capitalism (capitalist type of nation) or socialism (socialist type of nation), characterised by stable common economic ties, territory, language and cultural and psychological features'.⁷ But we face so many reservations and exclusions using these definitions for the analysis of realities that perhaps the way out of this theoretical dead end is to stop using the term 'nation' to denote a certain type of ethnic entity and to adhere instead to the internationally recognised meaning, in which a nation consists of the sum total of citizens in one state.

We should also consider 'nation' as a reality first of all, in the spiritual realm and as substance of collective conscience, as 'a self-defined rather than other-defined grouping, the broadly held conviction concerning the group's singular origin need not, and seldom will, accord with factual data'.⁸ 'Nation' is an expression of the common fates and interests of one's society's members, it is 'a kind of continuous, informal, ever self-reaffirming plebiscite'.⁹

This issue is extremely important. It goes to the very essence of Marxist-Leninist theory on the nationalities question (if one ever really exists), which requires re-examination. Marx sometimes used the term 'nation' when he was referring to peoples who did not have their own state structure or who belonged to a multi-ethnic state, but usually he was talking about a state formation. In my opinion, Lenin used the terms 'nation', '*narodnost*', 'nationality' and 'people' synonymously. He did not attach any theoretical significance to these concepts. In the important post-revolutionary document, *The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia* (1917), only the terms 'people' and 'ethnographic groups' were used.

Another conceptual anachronism is the division of people residing in the republics into 'native' or indigenous nations and 'non-native populations'. These concepts largely formed the foundation on which policies regarding ethnic relations were elaborated, and even established some legal norms during the period in Soviet history when efforts were being

made to overcome historical and economic backwardness and to make socio-economic and cultural levels more consistent.

Since the gaps in the levels of social development among the various Soviet peoples have narrowed, urbanisation and the internationalisation of culture and everyday activities have intensified. The sense of ethnic identity among both large and small populations has increased, together with collective and individual concerns about equal status and civil rights irrespective of the geographical or administrative affiliation of one's place of residence. About 60 million Soviet people now reside outside 'their own' national republics and they increasingly disagree with any status which describes them as 'non-native' populations, which brought them in the past and still continues to bring certain forms of discrimination and feelings of inferiority.

I am certain that in democratising public affairs, we should use in our socio-political practice simpler categories which underline the unifying factors between individual citizens, the state as a whole and the various republics. In this context some academics and publicists, especially in the Union republics, now reject the concept of the Soviet people as a new historical entity. This idea was articulated during the 1960s and 1970s (a time hardly notable for its theoretical findings) to reflect the development of common social and cultural characteristics and values throughout the country, a kind of meta-ethnicity. Now following a course of heated debates over ethnic issues, this concept, which used to be a kind of official doctrine, needs more calm and objective analysis.

The phenomenon of 'ethnic revival'

The Soviet Union has, indeed, experienced a rapid growth in ethnic self-awareness, which is sometimes simplistically evaluated as a new level of spiritual maturity in the entire multi-ethnic society. It is probably an achievement of Soviet socialism, and not the consequence of miscalculation or blunder.¹⁰ But it is necessary to recognise that many countries around the world have experienced this phenomenon of 'ethnic revival' in recent years, regardless of their geographical location and the nature of their social and political system. In Asia, Africa and Latin America ethnic unrest reflects critical social and political problems. In developed capitalist democracies this process almost always becomes evident through peaceful forms of political struggle and social movements. But even in these countries the process of ethnic revival comes to the fore-

front in the arena of social affairs—in terms of ethnicity and race (USA), religion (UK) and language (Canada). Relations are equally complicated in some socialist countries with poly-ethnic populations, which recently became conflicts and sometimes acquired a violent character. In the contemporary world many ethnic groupings are waging an armed struggle for political autonomy or their own sovereignty. Of the 120 or so wars, 72 per cent (86) are state–nation conflicts, that is, conflicts between states and ethnically marked populations within them.¹¹

What has caused the global phenomenon of 'ethnic revival'? It is often due to the desire to eliminate the historical, social and political injustice to which many peoples were subjected and which accumulated during the long periods of colonialist and neocolonialist policies, and also discrimination against immigrant, racial and ethno-religious groups in multi-ethnic states. Another reason is the reaction of ethno-cultural entities to some objective processes linked with scientific and technological advancements, urbanisation, and the levelling trends of mass culture and daily life. The sense of ethnic and cultural individualism, shifting from material articulations (in housing, clothing and occupation) into a spiritual dimension, serves increasingly as a protective reaction to the alienating and dehumanising influence of some aspects of modern civilisation.

Analysing the serious problems in ethnic relations in the USSR, it is possible to see manifestations of nearly all the problems just cited. Other factors include the accumulation of historical, social and political problems, which border on being ethnic issues. People have also reacted against the destructive impact of technological civilisation and modern lifestyle, felt especially strongly in the sphere of cultural traditions, historical memory and the erosion of the cultural mosaic according to the so-called 'frightening laws of entropy'. Ethnic relations are also affected negatively by the carelessly planned intensive economic development of whole regions where people are still engaged in traditional occupations (such as hunting and fishing in the Far North), by the limited natural resources and territories in areas where peoples live in close contact with one another in conditions of modest material and cultural amenities and by the dissocialising consequences of mass internal migrations.

The dramatic heritage of the Tsarist 'prison-house of nations' and the failure of true socialism in the USSR merely enhanced the phenomenon of 'ethnic revival' further. The situation was also complicated by the long-overdue process of democratising ethnic relations and the cor-

rection of many historical injustices. The need for penetrating reforms and transformations in this field has been singled out as one of the most important and urgent tasks of the Soviet state and Communist Party under the aegis of *perestroika*.

The goal of these reforms should be not only to expand the rights of the republics, but also to fulfil the interests of Soviet citizens in relation to their membership in one or another historical-cultural entity. It is necessary to proceed from the understanding that ethnic relations, their internal dynamics and the problems of a multi-ethnic state are like economic and socio-political relations, a constantly changing reality that could not be abolished through one sweeping 'solution of the national question'. Social and cultural entities develop in the process of historical change and upheaval. A constant analysis of this changing situation must be made by the state and by political groups in conjunction with academics, including those who have done specialist research in the field. It is necessary to determine the factors that lead to an eruption of ethnic sentiment or, on the contrary, that 'cool' ethnic feelings. Even such phenomena and accompanying concepts such as 'culture' and 'traditions' should be perceived as living phenomena that are born and die, shaped by people during the process of interaction between past experience and present reality.

The rights of peoples

We need now to work out and put into the Constitution a new conception of the rights of peoples. One of the primary rights of peoples expressed in international documents is the right to existence as a collectivity. At present there is no reason to suspect any planned threats to the existence of Soviet peoples or any coercive actions towards them on the part of the state or other groups of the population. However, one must not forget the deformation leading to such tragedies experienced by Soviet society through Stalin's coercive actions, and the recent violent clashes between ethnic groups in several regions of the country.

For the last two years the USSR has faced several violent crises, some of an inter-ethnic character as erupted between Armenians and Azerbaijanis regarding the issue of the administrative affiliation of the autonomous district, Nagorno Karabakh. The sad results of this ongoing conflict are that several dozen Armenians were killed in Sumgait in February 1988, with further casualties on both sides and about 300,000 refugees in both republics. In June 1989 around 100 fatalities,

1,000 destroyed homes and 11,000 evacuated Meskhetian Turks were the casualties (so far) of fierce inter-ethnic fighting in the central Asian republic of Uzbekistan.

The above-mentioned rights should include the state's recognition of the very existence of all ethnic entities. Such recognition should be recorded by the national censuses, in which the people themselves determine their own ethnic identity. The practice of providing a set list of peoples residing in the USSR is limiting—some peoples or groups with small populations who have preserved their common historical, cultural and linguistic heritage have had to class themselves as members of the dominant ethnic group in the area, or in some broader new formation.

The past three censuses (1959, 1970, 1979) did not register, for example, such relatively large groups as the Mishari (in 1926 243,000 were counted) the Talyshi (77,000) and several others. The reason was not only that it was the result of natural assimilation; it was also the result of some sort of official 'ethnic *nomenclatura*' and of a desire from the elites in the dominant group to foster ethnic 'integration and consolidation'.¹² This practice should be corrected.

Another widely accepted right is the choice of self-identification. The current practice in the USSR of being obliged to state one's ethnic identity in internal passports solely on the basis of the ethnic origin of one's parents limits the free expression of one's own ethnic identity, and also prevents citizens from defining themselves simply as citizens (merely writing 'Soviet' if they have lost their particular ethnic identity, for example) or indicating a more complex origin should they desire to express a complex double or triple self-identity. In multi-ethnic countries, as a rule, multiple self-identification is permitted when declaring ethnic origin. Therefore it is necessary to recognise officially that people have the right to belong to more than one ethnic group of their choice if they so desire to define themselves. An axiom of contemporary science is that ethnic self-identity is a socio-cultural concept. People are not born with this awareness; they develop it during socialisation and education. It is time that some of the laws regarding ethnic relations be changed accordingly.

An extremely important right of peoples is the right to sovereignty, self-determination and self-government. In this context we must not forget that the right to self-determination was made a principle of state policy for the first time during the October Revolution. The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia adopted in November 1917 was, therefore, of global significance, and strongly influenced world opinion

at the time. The creation of a multi-ethnic Soviet state was supposed to be a genuine achievement of revolutionary power. Unfortunately, both the conception itself and the practice of ensuring the right to self-determination began to lag behind changing reality. In several republics (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Georgia) people have now raised the question of sovereignty in explicit and strong forms. It should be recognised that in a multi-ethnic state, due to demographic, migratory, economic and cultural processes, and also as a result of socio-political forces and factors, situations can arise that require state structures to be modified and political statuses to be changed. These structures cannot function indefinitely, without contributing to social stagnation and political unrest. Other aspects of nationality policy must also be examined. For example, we now have the Adjars autonomous republic within the entity of the Georgian Union Republic. The Adjars are not a separate ethnic entity but are often aware that they are simply Georgians who have been Islamicised. Also there is still a Jewish autonomous district in the Soviet far east (Birobijan) existing as a separate national-territorial unit, where the Jewish population now comprises only 5.4 per cent of the district's population and 0.5 per cent of all Soviet Jews in the USSR. At the same time the status of Crimean Tatars and Soviet Germans was forcibly abolished in the 1940s, and still has not been restored.

As far as the right to maintain cultural distinction is concerned, including language, education, cultural heritage and folk traditions, it would be unfair to deny some of the positive achievements that have been made and that have been widely recognised throughout the world. However, there is much that remains unsatisfactory, as evidenced by heated debates, especially among the artistic intelligentsia. The growing interest in various forms of ethnic-cultural autonomy, which in the initial stages of the revolution were deemed inadequate for the implementation of radical social transformations, could play a positive role in our new historical conditions. Priority should be given to attending to language-related problems for the development of cultures of the various peoples. It is already a reality that in 1989 four republics (the three Baltic republics and Uzbekistan) unilaterally declared in their Constitutions that the language of the titular nationality would be the 'state language' within their territories. (In the Transcaucasian republics, this was declared earlier.)

Besides constitutional, socio-political guarantees, in a number of cases (especially regarding the small population of the Far North and

other regions), another important aspect of cultural development is the right to the pursuit of traditional occupations. Worldwide, such occupations are undergoing a crisis caused by the intensive industrial development of new territories and the undertaking of major economic projects. The USSR is no exception. The question is how to combine the process of economic modernisation in the country as a whole with traditional occupations that have not yet exhausted their possibilities and that are playing an important role in preserving not only the culture, but also the physical health and morale of these peoples. The situation in this respect is a dramatic one. The construction of giant dams on rivers, oil and gas pipelines and the Baikal-Amur railway brought devastating results for at least a dozen small groups of native peoples of Siberia. In the last decade, the average life expectancy among natives of the Far North decreased from sixty-one to forty-seven years.

Related to the intensive economic development of new territories and the aggravation of ecological problems, the issue of the right of peoples to control the use of the natural wealth and resources of their territories is of growing importance. This problem is at the forefront of social and political affairs in many countries around the world and it is an issue that is increasingly raised in the USSR. In order to avoid aggravating the situation further, it is necessary to ensure that a more thorough scientific analysis of proposed economic projects is carried out and to study public opinion, taking account of specific needs and our impact on nature as a whole. In my opinion, we should not only ensure that a mutually agreed part of the profits from using resources is turned over to the local population for developmental purposes, and that the people are involved in monitoring the activities of various ministries. Strict sanctions and compensations should also be stipulated for damage done to the economy and culture of these peoples. In a number of countries vast national parks have been established in areas with a fragile ecological balance and extreme environmental conditions, where the indigenous populations have the exclusive right to engage in their own occupations. The formation of such national park zones would also be advisable in some northern regions of the USSR, with the consent of the local people.

One extremely important aspect of life among modern peoples has still not been given due attention: the right to have access to the achievements of world civilisation. The idea of artificially maintaining cultural 'reservations' and 'a happy primitive life' has long ago been discredited, although it still has some advocates among scholars, politicians and

representatives of the business world. The peoples inhabiting these areas are striving to organise a system for their survival on the basis of the most efficient forms of production available, and to rise to the highest possible level of material existence by using the latest achievements and benefits of modern civilisation. The ability of these peoples to adapt—even those who just recently were at a stage resembling what we know of the earliest stages of historical evolution—is remarkable. This is evidenced by the example of how former nomad Bedouins in the Arab Emirates have advanced rapidly into the electronics age and how the remotest Eskimo communities in North America have modernised their everyday life.

The prestige of peoples and their sense of social well-being and patriotism in the contemporary world are not only determined by the size of population or territory, or the ancient pedigree of their cultural roots, but primarily by their modern achievements and ability to ensure a worthy existence. The patriotism and clearly expressed self-awareness of the Japanese, and their international prestige are based not only on respect for and preservation of their traditional culture, but also on the worldwide recognition of the vast accomplishments of the Japanese in the fields of technology, business and science.

Can the large and small populations in the USSR maintain pride in their culture and feel confident in the world community of the twenty-first century if they only restore their temples and promote their language, without learning about information and robot technology, if they return to the land with their same primitive tools, if they strengthen their families as economic and productive units but do not have ultrasonic equipment for every expectant mother, do not reduce infant mortality and do not have good nutrition?

The imperatives of a multi-ethnic state

To what extent do the state structure of the USSR, the legal practice, the political principles and ideological approach to state organisation correspond to the modern realities of Soviet federation and the demands for further development? First of all, we still have a limited understanding of 'socialist federalism'. It is believed that the USSR was established as a result of the free self-determination of nations on the basis of the principles of voluntary association and the equality of the subjects in fifteen nation-states (Union republics) in the federation.

The concept of a Soviet federation of 'nation-states' is inaccurate

when applied to the Union republics because they are multi-ethnic but, more importantly, this form of the principle of socialist federalism corresponds poorly to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state, to the worldwide practice of federalism, as well as to past Soviet experience. Friedrich Engels stressed that the state differs from the old tribal organisations in that it divides its subjects according to territory.¹³ This characteristic is maintained by virtually every state in the world, especially the large ones, including those formed according to the principle of federation. There is no reason to regard the territorial-geographic division of a federal state as a principle only of bourgeois federation, counterposing it to the ethno-social state division as the principle of socialist federalism.

Among the multi-ethnic states currently existing, the subjects of the federation in most cases are administrative territorial units such as provinces, states and cantons, which are generally formed on the basis of the population's local identity. This is the case both with the small country of Switzerland and with India, whose racial, ethnic and religious composition is no less diverse than that of the USSR (although their histories are different). Nevertheless, the main factor influencing the administrative-territorial division of these states is usually economic. States themselves arise and exist partly for the purpose of successfully organising the productive activity of the all-embracing social community – the main condition for the material existence of human beings. It is no accident that the Declaration on the Formation of the USSR (1922) specified that its goals were, among others, to ensure 'external security', 'internal economic success' and 'freedom for ethnic development'. Nothing, however, was mentioned in this regard in the Constitution of 1936. Article 70 of the 1977 Constitution states in general terms that the USSR 'draws all its nations and nationalities together for the purpose of jointly building communism'. This empty and now unworkable phrase actually has no real meaning either for elaborating the concept of a federal state for its subjects ('national states', or republics), nor for the peoples of the country.

We should redefine this formula by laying as its foundation the goal of creating a society that ensures the best conditions for the social existence of its members, on the basis of an efficient economy and in a democratic structure. At this historical point this structure is impossible without real sovereignty and autonomy for the federation of the different kinds of ethnic units. But we should also understand that there are no cases in the modern world when such a major multi-ethnic state has

achieved anything significant when its peoples remained forcibly confined in their own 'ethnic apartments'.

The general orientation in ensuring the development of ethnic groups in alliance with each other should be to ensure the rights of peoples on a national level, sealed in the Constitution or, possibly, in a new Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of the USSR. But it seems even more important to ensure these rights by developing and furthering the individual rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens as a whole. Only by realising these rights will it be possible to create a situation in which each citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, will feel completely unoppressed in any part of the USSR. A high standard of living, harmonious social relations and genuine democracy will lay a reliable and long-lasting foundation on which to preserve and promote the cultural diversity of the Soviet peoples.

Notes

- ¹ See V Kozlov, *The Peoples of the Soviet Union*, London: Hutchinson, 1988, pp 15-40.
- ² The first relatively complete census of the population after the revolution was made in 1926. It recorded 190 peoples and ethnic groups, of whom 12 were treated as insignificant, and fuller data was elaborated on 178 of them. See *All-Union Population Census 1926*, Moscow, 1929, volume 17, pp 106-7.
- ³ *The Constitution of the USSR: political and legal commentary*, Moscow: Politizdat Publishers, 1982, p 208.
- ⁴ P Skalik, 'Le rôle de la théorie de l'ethnos dans l'ethnographie soviétique et dans la politique officielle soviétique concernant la "solution de la question nationale"', *Cahiers du Monde Russes et Soviétiques* (forthcoming in spring 1990).
- ⁵ The Russian term is *narodnost* derived from *narod* for 'people' (exact equivalent in English). It is used in Soviet social anthropology to denote an ethnic entity at a specific state of socio-economic development with corresponding attributes.
- ⁶ Y Bromlei, *Theoretical Ethnography*, Moscow: Nauka, 1984.
- ⁷ A Bagzamov, J Golotvin, A Tadevosyan, 'Present problems in the development of national relations and in internationalist and patriotic education', Moscow: Politizdat, 1988, p 15.
- ⁸ W Conner, 'A nation is a nation, is an ethnic group, is a . . .', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1(4) October 1978, p 380.
- ⁹ F Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983, p 53.
- ¹⁰ I Dedkov, 'Instead of yesterday, instead of today and tomorrow', *Kommunist* 1988 (8) p 13.
- ¹¹ B Nietschmann, 'The Third World War', *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 11(3) 1987, p 7.
- ¹² M V Kryukov, 'Ethnic processes in the USSR and some aspects of Soviet population censuses', *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* (2) 1989, p 27.
- ¹³ F Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Selected Works, volume 3, Moscow, 1973, p 327.

In praise of chauvinism: rhetorics of nationalism in Yugoslav politics

The purpose of this article is not to apologise for mindless bigotry, but to explore dispassionately the sociological significance of nationalism in Yugoslavia. While ironic in intention, the title points us towards the need for a basic re-evaluation of this problem. Press coverage of Yugoslav affairs, certainly in the UK, has reported the recent history of the country largely in terms of a succession of conflicts in which nationality has featured strongly. The Croatian upheavals of 1970–71 were followed a decade later by the Albanian disturbances in the province of Kosovo. The rise of Slobodan Milošević as the leader of a distinctively Serbian populism, and the resulting violent clashes with the Albanian population over the revision of the Serbian Constitution, have once again concentrated attention on issues of nationality. Indeed, if one confined one's reading about Yugoslavia to press reports one could be forgiven for thinking that the principal cause of Yugoslavia's difficulties is nationalism, which threatens to wreck the system. Nationalism is, simply, a 'bad thing'. I want to challenge that assumption, and to suggest that the nationalist expression of conflict ought to be understood in a more positive, though more complex, light.

The issue is not confined in its relevance to Yugoslavia, but the experience of Yugoslavia can be instructive as a point of comparison with several other relatively new states. The phenomenon of nationalism can be understood in terms of the process of institutionalising a common political discourse in such states.

Nationalism and political instability

Why have we come to accept that nationalism is so central to the explanation of the Yugoslav crisis?¹ Political sociology certainly gives no warrant for the association of national diversity with inherent political instability. In fact, the prejudices of the Yugoslav regime seem to have been allowed to feed those images which circulate in the press, where they have become entrenched largely because of the lack of any serious challenge to them on the part of those with an academic engagement with Yugoslav affairs.

The ruling dogma in Yugoslavia (often echoed in similar terms elsewhere in Eastern Europe) is that nationalism will, if allowed, naturally and necessarily lead back to the horrors of inter-ethnic strife experienced in World War II. The League of Communists has represented itself as being the only force able to rise above national particularism, to secure both a harmonious state and the overthrow of the class enemy. The problem is posed in terms of stark oppositions: nationalism is divisive, communism unifies; nationalism is internally unstable, communism has made for internal institutional stability; nationalism was unable to defend Yugoslavia against external aggression, communism has done so. There are two objections to this argument. It does not fit the historical facts; and it is theoretically vacuous, and does not address with any interest the question of what nationalism is doing in contemporary Yugoslavia (or Armenia, or Estonia).

The supposed opposition between nationalism and communism is plainly ill-founded. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) has been as often associated with the political use of nationality as with its suppression. After all, it was King Alexander who, between 1929 and 1934, tried unsuccessfully to impose a common Yugoslav nationality, at the expense of historical forms of national identity. From the time of the royal dictatorship the party has offered itself as the champion of national differences, recognising these and enshrining the facts of diversity in a succession of post-war Constitutions. As Paul Shoup has argued effectively, however, the LCY has never been able to develop a coherent theoretical stance with regard to nationality. Typically it has treated the question through a succession of ad hoc responses to tactical needs; and the much vaunted respect for national identity in Yugoslavia has consisted rather of a tacit agreement to 'bracket' the issue, removing it from intellectual controversy instead of attempting a proper analysis of the problem.² Arguably, communism has been associated in Yugoslavia with the creation of three nationalities which, with varying degrees of probability, might not exist today without its ministrations: Macedonian, Muslim and Montenegrin. It seems closer to the historical truth to portray communism as the most powerful force creating and legitimating national identity in post-war Yugoslavia.

Theories of nationalism

Turning to the putative association between communism and stability, one is forced to ask what are the continuing springs of contemporary

nationalism? If communism provides stability, why is nationalism able to disturb that situation? Three equally unsatisfactory solutions have been proffered.

The role of external agitators is sometimes appealed to in the case of Albanian nationalism (as it was in the case of Croatia in the 1970s). This cannot offer an acceptable general explanation of the phenomenon, even if it contains a limited truth in these specific cases. The suggestion has never been entertained seriously in relation to the current events in Serbia. Sociologists are always sceptical about too ready a reliance on exogenous causes: but it is not just fashion in sociological explanation which has prevented this from being adopted within academic circles more generally.

Another alternative, possibly more plausible in the case of Serbia, seems to envisage nationality as a purely natural attribute of human consciousness which, as in Freud's view of sexuality, can only be repressed at a cost. Such views are the obvious inheritors of the Romantic tradition, and where they surface in social science the task of 'explaining' nationalism is interpreted in terms of *éclaircissement* rather than explication. The latter is scarcely necessary if the existence of the phenomenon can be taken for granted. In this way Fred Singleton's otherwise excellent survey manages to avoid altogether confronting the question of why contemporary Yugoslavs do see themselves as members of a particular set of 'peoples'.³ In common with many other historical commentators, he considers the problem to be how the several (naturally occurring) nations of the region managed to secure recognition of their inherent qualities of being nations.

The third possibility is to see nationalism within the Marxist paradigm, as an ideological reflection of underlying economic conflicts. The primary reality is the economy: nationalist disorders simply reflect economic disorder. It is strange that this view is frequently adopted by writers who, in other respects, would not dream of associating themselves with the Marxist tradition. Harold Lydall's recent work is a case in point.⁴ There is certainly an economic dimension to the problems of Yugoslavia, but there are good reasons for demanding a further explanation as to why the specific form of that crisis should give rise to nationalist manifestations such as those which we see. The link is far from obvious.

In fact, in spite of extensive academic and lay discussion of nationalism in Yugoslavia, the question as to why conflicts in Yugoslav political life should be expressed specifically in national terms still

remains unanswered. How does nationalism function? More particularly, what does it mean?

Nationalism as political 'rhetoric'

An adequate answer to these very large questions is certainly not possible within the compass of a single article, and indeed a more limited objective will be attempted on this occasion. I aim to begin recasting appreciation of the nature and role of nationalism in Yugoslav political life by placing the question on a distinctive theoretical footing, examining it in terms of the characteristics of political 'rhetoric'. Although many aspects of this approach are more familiar under the guise of 'ideology', this term is deliberately eschewed because its use typically aligns one directly with Marxist theory. Similarly, contemporary social theory makes a great deal of 'discourse analysis', a term which also seems unsatisfactory, as 'discourse' carries with it unavoidable (and unsuitable) echoes of Cartesian rationalism. My preferred option is the term 'rhetoric', in which I follow the great American critic Kenneth Burke.⁵

The importance of a political rhetoric has been acknowledged in different ways in political sociology. Whether one describes the problem in terms of the Weberian concept of 'legitimation', or Gramsci's 'hegemony', the idea is generally accepted that any stable political order requires a generally diffused and widely accepted linguistic and symbolic medium. There must be ways in which political actors—rulers or ruled—give accounts of their own and each other's actions. The hypothesis I want to propose here is that, for one reason or another, there has not developed in Yugoslavia a stable 'rhetoric' of this kind. The following argument sets out in a simplified and highly schematised form the reasons why I believe this has not taken place, leaving the field of political culture open to varieties of nationalism.

The failure of political rhetoric in Yugoslavia

An important reason for the failure to develop an effective political rhetoric in Yugoslavia is the failure of alternatives. An acceptable rhetoric must simultaneously include the parties to political struggle while enabling them to articulate the variety and specificity of their contending interests. The view of conflict adopted here depends heavily on that of Georg Simmel, who insisted that it should be treated as a form of

'sociation'—positively, as a type of structured human interaction, and not as the absence of society.⁶

Religion, although possibly a prime candidate for consideration here, could never provide an acceptable political medium in Yugoslavia. Religion in the history of Yugoslavia is heavily freighted with oppositions which are just too deep, and would create a succession of exclusions, without defining a symbolic community. For Orthodox and Catholic populations alike the story of their struggle for independence includes episodes in which 'freedom' has come to be defined in terms of liberation from Islam, from 'the five hundred years of Turkish night'. Between Catholic and Orthodox, on the other hand, falls the dreadful shadow of the so-called 'Independent State of Croatia' (the puppet created by the Axis powers after the fall of the first Yugoslav state in 1941) in which the ostentatiously Catholic regime of Ante Pavelić sought to solve the problem of its large Orthodox Serbian population along lines reminiscent of Hitler's 'final solution' to the Jewish question. Any workable political rhetoric in Yugoslavia must of necessity, for these reasons, bracket issues of religious identity as far as possible.

An important test of this hypothesis can be found in the creation, since 1945, of a 'Muslim' nation in Yugoslavia. During the early centuries of the Ottoman Empire substantial numbers of indigenous Slavs converted to Islam in the Balkans, especially in the region of Bosnia. Since Serb and Croat national identity have historically been inextricably intertwined with religion (Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism respectively) the question of the national provenance of a Serbo-Croat-speaking Islamic population presented modern Yugoslav politics with a puzzle. In the fascist state of Pavelić they were assiduously courted as 'Muslim Croats', by a regime anxious to secure their compliance in the elimination of the Serbs. In the post-war period, however, the policy of bracketing controversy over nationality has, curiously, led to the designation of Muslims as a particular nationality. The reason for this, of course, is that if they can be demonstrated to be a distinct nationality this removes them from the competition to demonstrate their 'real' identity as either Serbs or Croats, and helps to neutralise the territorial aspirations of either with respect to Bosnia. Here the bracketing strategy is exemplified probably in its clearest form. In this process the specifically religious connotation of the term 'Muslim' has been played down: they are officially referred to as *Muslimi u etničkom smislu* ('Muslims in the ethnic sense'). What such an

identity precisely means, however, remains (deliberately?) unclear, as linguistically they are not distinguishable from either Serbs or Croats, and they are quite explicitly not people of Turkish descent, from whom they are distinguished in the census returns. What is more, religious practice is deemed to be irrelevant to the question of whether or not one is a 'Muslim'. The use of this device has been quite important in the amelioration, if not in the resolution, of nationality conflicts in Bosnia. 'Muslim' identity has been able to function acceptably in this way within the secular Yugoslav state precisely because it has been cleared of all specifically religious significance.⁷

One might generalise the significance of this illustration for the possible development of pluralistic politics in Yugoslavia. Explicitly confessional parties of any kind would, in all probability, have ultimately incompatible theological and philosophical views about the nature of the state. Although the history of Church-state relations in Yugoslavia has been far from untroubled in the post-war years, there appears to be one precondition for any reasonably successful prescription for the future of Yugoslav politics: namely, there must be a general acceptance of the secular character of the state.

Class, similarly, has limited value as a central rhetorical category in a supposedly socialist society. Having eliminated the exploiting class, the rhetoric of class can only serve to define the boundaries of the political community *vis-à-vis* real or imaginary outsiders. Hence, at different times, reference to the dangers of the 'restoration of capitalism', or the threat of the 'technocratic deformation' of self-management have in different ways served as levers for political mobilisation in defence of the regime. They have done so in such a way as to mark out those (actual or fictitious) enemies whose class interest is alleged to pose a threat to the secure development of self-managing socialism. One cannot, however, legitimately formulate the issues in the political struggle within such a community in class terms.

An important illustration of the impossibility of importing the rhetoric of class into socialist politics in Yugoslavia is the fate of Milovan Djilas. His outspoken identification of a 'new class' of political officials as the principal moral and political obstacle to socialism was the most significant factor precipitating his expulsion from the inner circle of leadership in the 1950s.⁸

The heart of the matter appears to be the failure of the Yugoslav regime to institutionalise a distinctive rhetoric of 'self-management', which would provide ways of identifying and expressing interests, and

allow mobilising parties to conflict, legitimately, within the system. Self-management has been trumpeted as the distinctive badge of the 'Yugoslav road to socialism'. It has been held to provide an ideological and institutional lynch-pin which secures both the external legitimacy of a socialist regime which turned its back on the leadership of Moscow, and the internal legitimacy of the Communist Party which affirms its own 'leading role', while attempting to accommodate the exigencies of a country containing a diverse range of social and economic interests. In spite of all that has been written and said about the unique interest of the system of 'socialist self-management' both inside and outside Yugoslavia, and its real achievements at many levels, it must be recognised that it has not succeeded in fully institutionalising itself as the source of a taken-for-granted rhetoric of Yugoslav politics. The language of self-management remains, on the whole, an opaque and mystifying externality to which ordinary Yugoslavs do not turn when seeking for ways in which to communicate their own concerns and aspirations.

In the absence of the opportunity to demonstrate that point fully, two casual illustrations will have to suffice. Over the past two decades industrial life has seen a growing number of occasions on which the workers have resorted to strikes—'against themselves'—as a means of highlighting their collective grievances and a form of communal action. Within the past two years both citizens and populist leaders have on numerous occasions resorted to demonstrations, completely by-passing the institutions of self-management and the delegate system in order to state demands and secure results. A much fuller study of these processes is needed; but it does seem at first sight that there are two reasons for the failure of self-management at this rhetorical level.

An image of society as being composed of an undifferentiated 'working people' of Yugoslavia will necessarily tend to represent political problems in terms of a bland series of 'adjustments', achieved through 'social compacts', 'self-managing agreements' and 'communities of interest', rather than through honestly recognising, naming and legitimating conflict and its bases. (The terms used here refer to particular institutional forms recognised in the Yugoslav legal code.)

Complex (and occasionally imaginative) as the peculiar language of self-management is, it fails to offer anything which could stand a remote chance of succeeding as a political rhetoric, because its very essence is to obscure the character of social conflict. It has come to provide a partial rhetoric, the distinctive feature of which is that it specifies in

every one of its core concepts a normative inclusion, while remaining silent about conflict (with the exception of the propensity of politicians to rail about the enemies and perverters of self-management).

The regime emerged from the period of war and revolution with a considerable fund of legitimacy, which it has proceeded to spend prodigally over the post-war years without commensurate reinvestment. This is a point on which previous commentators on Yugoslav affairs have sometimes been seriously misleading, although it is easy to understand how this misjudgement could have been made as long as the stage was occupied by the charismatic figure of President Tito. With his passing, and in the light of more recent historical research, we are able to appreciate just how serious has been the strain on the regime's claims to legitimacy in the past.⁹ Without in any way denying the significance of the economic difficulties which now face Yugoslavia, I suggest that one important reason for the exceptional severity of the country's current problems is that it now also faces a major legitimization crisis.

The failure of self-management to generate a legitimating rhetoric has left a vacuum in the political life of the country, into which nationalism has moved. It has been able to do so because it has been sanctioned by the regime as the only (although semi-legitimate) rhetorical vehicle for the expression of conflict. The current political structure of the country, including the six republics and two autonomous provinces, was created to solve the post-war problem of creating a legitimate alternative to the Serbian hegemonism of the Karadjordjević monarchy. The self-determination of its own nations and nationalities has been a vital component of the regime's self-definition. So although the officially-sanctioned account of Yugoslav history does oppose 'nationalism' and 'communism' along the lines mentioned above, and there has been a constant series of attacks on 'chauvinism', 'irredentism' and 'nationalism', the regime itself has elevated the republics and provinces to the status of being the only legitimate bearers of openly competing interests within the system. In this way it has prepared for itself a major contradiction within which it has become ensnared.

The diversity of Yugoslav 'nationalisms'

At this point it is important to acknowledge a central feature of nationalism, and that is its vacuity. The terms 'nationalism' and 'nationality' imply no specific intellectual or symbolic content: they are

portmanteau terms which can be used to accommodate virtually anything. Clearly in Yugoslavia (as elsewhere) 'nationalism' does not mean the same thing in different regions. It is evident from an examination of Yugoslav history, as still today, that to speak of Serb or Slovene, Croat or Albanian nationality is to refer to different types of political culture. A thorough treatment of this issue is not possible within the confines of a short article, but it is possible to give a brief indication of the ways in which the concept of 'nation' functions quite differently in political discourse in different regions of Yugoslavia. The contrasts between the rhetoric of nationality in Slovenia and Serbia provide a good example.

The Slovenes have never had anything resembling a national state of their own, unlike the other south Slav peoples. The creation of a Slovene national identity has always taken place within the context of larger and more inclusive political units. Although one does hear of Slovene separatism, their historical tradition has typically emphasised the creation of a succession of institutions which stand between the state and the individual, acting as the focus for common action and common identity. The precise form of these has varied. During the nineteenth century, under the Habsburg monarchy, where the cities of the region had become thoroughly germanised, these forms were typically tied to the patterns and processes of peasant culture—principally the parish and rural cooperatives. These continued to be of vital importance during the inter-war years, when they were supplemented by educational institutions, banks and, very significantly, the Slovene Popular Party, a clerical-led party of the Christian Democrat variety.

Throughout the history of Yugoslavia Slovenes have cooperated with the state, and in both pre-war and post-war regimes have been centrally identified with it. This was particularly the case between the wars, when the leader of the Slovene Popular Party, Antun Korošec, held cabinet positions in every parliamentary government in alliance with the dominant Serb parties. Within the wider framework of Yugoslavia, through the medium of their distinctive language, the Slovenes have sustained and indeed developed a sense of identity by building institutions at a sub-state level. Among the latest in this series of ventures have been the creation of a Slovene Agrarian Union, together with a Slovene Union of Agrarian Youth, and the emergence of a peace movement.

This approach is marked in Slovene political rhetoric by an emphasis on the importance of the concept of 'civil society', and the affirmation that 'society' is not coterminous with the state. It is illustrated very well by events during the early summer of 1988, when two journalists and a

serving military NCO were arrested, tried and sentenced for possession and dissemination of a secret military document. The events were accompanied by a massive general outcry in the republic, by very large public demonstrations, and by a petition which bore the signatures, not only of many individuals but also of representatives of more than 100 organisations.¹⁰

The document in question had given reason to believe that the Yugoslav army had prepared plans for the arrest of a large number of people, who were known (or alleged) to have an active commitment to various forms of political opposition, in the event of any large-scale civil disorder. The grounds for defence advanced by the soldier who had leaked it were those of the right of the public to know facts of such central political importance. The aspect of the case which appears to have excited the greatest concern was the fact that the trials took place before a military tribunal, and not the civil court. The specifically military aspect of the process meant that access to the accused by lawyers, relatives and others directly concerned with their welfare was greatly restricted, as was press coverage of the trial itself.

Within the context of this discussion of political rhetoric, an important feature of the episode was the way in which events came to be conceptualised in Slovenia in terms of a problematic process of 'the militarisation of society'. The issues in question were the extent to which it was proper that the military desire for secrecy should be allowed primacy over the need for an informed democratic political debate, the conditions under which military law could claim a degree of priority over the institutions of civil law, and the thinking apparently exposed by the leaked document, which allowed the military the role of determining the parameters within which permissible limits of political dissent were to be determined.

Conventionally 'nationalistic' imagery played a muted part in the debate over these events. The strength of the political protest can be explained, however, in terms of the stark contrast between the peremptory demands of the Yugoslav state—especially in that these emanated from the armed forces—and the independence of republican Slovene institutions, which had a measure of public accountability. The future of Slovene national independence was seen to depend upon the integrity of the latter (expressed in terms of the concept of 'civil society'). An important consequence of this feature of Slovene political culture is that one finds in the republic the greatest advance towards real political pluralism in Yugoslavia (and possibly also in Eastern Europe more generally).

The contrast with Serbia is remarkable, where there is a very weak tradition of political pluralism.¹¹ The Serbs acquired a state early in the nineteenth century, even before they acquired a sense of nationality in the modern sense. Serbian politics and political aspirations have therefore always been bound up intimately with statehood: there has been also a close identification between the state and the Serbian Orthodox Church. In the post-war years the lowest levels of tolerance of expressions of political opposition have generally been found in Belgrade. The wider 'student movement', which in 1968 appeared in all the Yugoslav universities, was met with greater official hostility in Belgrade than in any other city.¹² The innocuous and scholarly endeavours of the Praxis group of philosophers in the 1960s similarly resulted in their uncompromising ejection from the University of Belgrade.

Under these circumstances it seems hardly surprising to find that innovation in Serbian politics has recently taken the form of a populist leader emerging within the League of Communists itself.¹³ No full or serious analysis of the emergence of Slobodan Milošević and the style of politics which he embodies has yet been attempted either in Yugoslavia or elsewhere. My remarks here will be suggestive and programmatic rather than a digest of established academic wisdom. A reading of the articles and speeches of the man who in five years rose from obscurity to the presidency of the Serbian republic (and notoriety throughout Yugoslavia) reveals a very clear and consistent picture of a rhetoric which may be interpreted as deeply symptomatic of Serbian politics, rather than purely personal and idiosyncratic. Two features of Milošević's political rhetoric are especially worthy of comment in this context: his political language and the understanding which emerges from his public pronouncements of the relevant actors in the drama of politics. The notion of 'rhetoric' is particularly apt in relation to Milošević, as his language stands in sharp contrast to that which is typical of Yugoslav political life. With few exceptions it is devoid of the flat jargon of socialism which makes attention to political reporting in Yugoslavia so unrewarding. He speaks and writes something very closely akin to the language of the ordinary person—simply constructed, direct, and for the most part concrete in reference.¹⁴

A surprising feature of his language, in view of the way in which he has become associated with a specifically nationalist standpoint, is the relative scarcity of recourse to the more heavily-laden emotional symbols of the former strength of the Serbian state and the glory of its ecclesiastical past. If he is concerned to argue the need for the rightful

claims of a Serbian state to be justly acknowledged within the framework of the Yugoslav federation, his case is couched in terms of the greatness of the Serbian people, rather than the historical attributes of their state. More typically, his language makes reference to popular, homely and traditionally conceived moral values.

One very striking illustration of this latter point will suffice here. At a time when there was great controversy over the personal security of the declining number of Serbs and Montenegrins still residing in the predominantly Albanian province of Kosovo (particularly focused upon the allegedly high incidence of sexual assaults), Milošević addressed the issue during a visit to a factory in the town of Uroševac, in April 1987.¹⁵

It is just and moral that every nation, and its own most progressive people before all others, should struggle against their own nationalism: against all those terrible and inhuman actions which offend and degrade others. For these terrible and inhuman things, in the end, offend and degrade that nation itself, and those of its members who perpetrate them.

The Albanian nation must defend not only Serbs and Montenegrins from the shame of those things which its nationalists do, but themselves. With every assaulted Serbian child a stain falls on every Albanian who has not prevented such a shameful thing. The safety of Serbian and Montenegrin children, here in Kosovo, ought rather to be the concern of every Albanian mother and father, than that of the police.

The significance of this passage is not principally that the speaker fails to question whether the alleged incidents have taken place or not, but rather that he deals with the issue by placing it centrally within the language of traditional Balkan values—the collective responsibility of kin for the defence of moral values, and shared responsibility for the avoidance of shame.

This resort to common language and the appeal to popular values is entirely consistent with the other principal feature of the rhetoric of Milošević. I refer to his characterisation of the actors in the political scene in terms of a simple opposition between 'the people' and 'the bureaucracy'. This second feature is, if anything, more obvious and well-developed than the first. Milošević presents himself as the spokesman of ordinary folk—'the people', 'working people', and (very frequently) 'honest people'. (Note that in Serbo-Croat the word *narod* can be translated both as 'the people' or as 'the nation'.) In opposition to their legitimate interests and aspirations is a bureaucracy which is 'con-

servative', self-serving, preoccupied with 'theoretical' issues and beset by 'opportunism'. Asked in a press interview in *Večernje novosti* in January 1989 to explain his own vision of a way of escape from the current crisis, Milošević listed as first among the necessary tasks 'renewal of the administration'.¹⁶ The ordinary people are the repository of good sense and traditional virtues, but the nation has been betrayed by the weakness and moral sterility of their leaders.

In pursuit of the 'renewal' of Serbian (and consequently of Yugoslav) public life, Milošević appeals to the Serbian people over the heads of all established political institutions. In this respect his version of nationalism contrasts very plainly with that current in Slovenia. He has no sense of the need for a network of intermediate institutions which will provide a flourishing 'civil society' within which the nation can find its own identity, protected from the intervention of the state. If anything, his demand is for a closer union between the state and the people, in which the standards of conduct of the former—and above all, of the Communist Party itself—are more closely conformed to the needs and values of the latter. In this respect, Milošević is no more of a novelty in Serbia than the Peasants' Union is in Slovenia. Both are entirely coherent within a language of politics which has been an integral part of the culture of their regions for a very long time. Whether they recognise it or not, in certain very important respects Slobodan Milošević is as much the inheritor of the mantle of Nikola Pašić as the rural organisers of Slovenia are of the Slovene People's Party of Antun Korošec.¹⁷

Conclusion

The main conclusion of my argument is that, by its failure to institutionalise a common political rhetoric based upon socialist self-management, the Yugoslav regime has quite unwittingly kept alive the possibility of developing rhetorics, which are alternatives to that of self-managing socialism, through which a wide variety of disputed issues can be articulated. At an official level, political developments will no doubt continue to be rationalised in terms of the vocabulary of socialist self-management. At a deeper level, however, the success of the reform measures which are currently being attempted by the Yugoslav government will depend critically upon the ways in which they are seen to be intelligible within a series of rhetorics based upon nationality.

To those who see the tackling of Yugoslavia's economic problems as

the most serious test, these things may seem to be a diversion from the important issues. Until recently, however, an insurmountable obstacle to economic change in many respects has been the lack of any real debate, not so much about the issues as the interests involved and the available alternatives at the level of political institutions, through which economic change might be guided and made accountable. The lack of legitimate means of organising political opposition around competing courses of action has been a significant result of the rather stifling embrace of the League of Communists, which has insisted throughout on defending its 'leading role' in politics.

In some ways nationalism has operated as a kind of political Trojan horse, by which it has become possible to smuggle a significant measure of pluralism into the system. Both of the illustrations which have been considered here introduce standards of value into political debate which relativise the historical claims of the League of Communists. From these, in each case, flow forms of political action which, at least potentially, permit organisation around competing interests and political goals. To this extent, while one can share the frustration which other Yugoslavs experience when confronted by the apparently smug introversion of Slovene politics, or the anxieties provoked by the uncritical emotional fervour of Serbian populism, it is nevertheless possible to speak 'in praise of chauvinism'.

Notes

¹ This question is a relatively peripheral concern in the context of this article: but in passing I would like to suggest that in part we see here a reflection of British ethnocentrism. It is an assumption which has been taken for granted in Britain since the days of the Tudors that the hegemony of a strong state is necessary for the successful operation of political life. Anything which challenges this central authority is disruptive, debilitating and therefore to be deplored. (It is interesting that most British people do not distinguish between citizenship and nationality.) This negative view is qualified with respect to the Eastern European countries, in so far as British commentators tend to look positively on anything which serves to destabilise communism.

² P Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*, New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1968.

³ F B Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

⁴ H Lydall, *Yugoslav Socialism: theory and practice*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1984; *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989.

⁵ K Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, New York: Prentice Hall, 1950.

⁶ D N Levine (ed), *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*, Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 1971.

⁷ For a lucid and concise discussion of Islam in Yugoslavia, see: A Popović, 'L'Islam en Yougoslavie', *Cadmos* 11(41), spring 1988, pp 63-77.

⁸ A Rothberg (ed), *Anatomy of a Moral: the political essays of Milovan Djilas*, London: Thames

& Hudson, 1959; M Djilas, *The New Class: an analysis of the communist system*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1957.

- ⁹ In his recent study of the importance of the 'cominformists', Ivo Banac has documented fully the scale, persistence and severity of the challenge to Tito's leadership offered by those who sided with the USSR after 1948. See I Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: cominformist splits in Yugoslav communism*, Ithaca, New York/London: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- ¹⁰ Press coverage of these events has generally mentioned 200 such organisations. The statement about the 'foundation of a committee for the protection of the rights of Janecz Janša', published in *Independent Voices from Yugoslavia* 4(2) June 1988, pp 8-10, lists only 108 organisations by name. This issue of *Independent Voices* carries a full account of the events preceding the trial itself.
- ¹¹ Much of the diversity of Serbian politics between the wars is accounted for by the activity of Serbs resident outside the former Kingdom of Serbia, principally in the former Habsburg lands. In this respect there were marked contrasts between the political culture of Serbs from Serbia itself, and the 'prečani'.
- ¹² A full account of these events has recently been published: N Popov *et al* (eds), *Contra fatum: slučaj grupa profesora Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu*, Beograd: Mladost, 1989.
- ¹³ For a full discussion of the concept of 'populism', see J B Alcock, "'Populism': a brief biography", *Sociology* 5(3) 1971, pp 371-87. See also M Canovan, *Populism*, London: Junction Books, 1981. A recent attempt to apply the concept to Balkan politics is contained in N P Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: early parliamentarism and late industrialisation in the Balkans and Latin America*, London: Macmillan, 1986.
- ¹⁴ The following discussion of the political language of Slobodan Milošević is based on his collected speeches and articles: *Godine raspleta* (fourth edition), Belgrade: BIGZ, 1989.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 147-8.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 307.
- ¹⁷ Additional information on the historical development of the various forms of nationalism among the South Slavs can be found in I Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: origins, history, politics*, Ithaca, New York/London: Cornell University Press, 1984. For a briefer discussion, see I J Lederer, 'Nationalism and the Yugoslavs', in P F Sugar and I J Lederer (eds), *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Seattle, Washington/London: University of Washington Press, 1969; also F B Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples*.

Epilogue: the ethnic future of nations

This issue of *Third World Quarterly* addresses a topic which is of increasing concern to academics, politicians and the general public: the rise of nationalism throughout the world. The cases presented in these articles raise a number of issues, both individually and collectively, and try to unearth the complexity of specific cases or of the diversity of the rise of nationalism since World War II. A more complete discussion of the various nationalist trends worldwide, and their causes, affords us keener insights into the conditions which have produced such phenomena and which will most likely continue to do so for generations to come.

Terms used to describe the world's peoples

As an anthropologist who works primarily on issues of human rights involving the world's distinct peoples, I prefer the term 'nation' to other possible choices. There is, however, little consensus in this regard. In fact, there is considerable confusion about which terms are most appropriate to describe the world's peoples and the subtle distinctions between these terms. However, indigenous scholars, elders, politicians and religious leaders are beginning to discuss more openly and more positively the issues pertaining to nation, tribe and ethnic group as well as the distinctions inherent in each. Users of the terms below should be aware of their implications and meanings for others.

Indigenous peoples. Culturally distinct groups that have occupied a region longer than other immigrant or colonist groups are generally referred to as indigenous peoples. This term is the one most frequently used in UN documents and by activists who work with smaller societies (formerly referred to by the more politically sensitive term 'tribes'). Within the UN, the term 'indigenous peoples' is generally interpreted to mean non-European groups living in areas colonised by European immigrants or their descendants, thus locating most indigenous peoples in the Western hemisphere, the Philippines, the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand. Until the 1980s, this term was used only to describe peoples in areas where the descendants of colonial powers still form the dominant political groups. Consequently, it has only recently been applied to groups throughout Africa (rather than just South Africa) and Asia.

including both the PRC and the USSR. The exclusion of indigenous peoples from the African and Asian context meant that the issues raised by the concept did not threaten states from those continents and they, in turn, supported UN positions to defend the rights of colonised people. There are no theoretical grounds, however, only political ones, for such exclusions or for avoiding internal colonialism in the definition (as in Bangladesh, Burma, China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand and the USSR).

Tribal peoples. The term 'tribal people' is most often used to describe a distinct cultural group that retains a strong sense of identity (with a separate language and culture), a territorial base, and a self-contained sociopolitical organisation that predates the creation of contemporary states. In the strict anthropological sense, this term would not include band societies such as the San bushmen of southern Africa, the Ache of Paraguay or the Agta of the Philippines, which would, rather, be seen as 'pre-tribal'. While it is small, band societies such as these that many non-anthropologists are prepared to define as tribal peoples, there is nothing in the definition that precludes tribal groups from holding power and controlling and manipulating the state to serve their own needs. Such actions are, in fact, known as 'tribalism', a term describing ethnic chauvinism, whereby one tribal group uses its power or influence to improve or consolidate its economic, social or political position without regard for other groups in the country. Such actions lead to discrimination, and often persecution. Ironically, it is those tribes who have gained (and abused) power who frequently decry the evils of tribalism or ethnic chauvinism and attempt to dismantle or destroy other tribal groups.

Ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are culturally distinct groups within a state, that retain their cultural identity while accepting and operating within the political, institutional framework of the state. These groups are usually held together by a combination of at least some of the following factors—former tribal affiliation, common racial or cultural heritage, kinship, religion or residential ties. Ethnic groups can either be members of immigrant populations (Jews, overseas Chinese, blacks in the western hemisphere, whites in South Africa, South Asians throughout the British empire) or assimilated populations who have lost (or willingly abandoned) their political autonomy to become participants in larger states. Ethnic groups can be majorities or minorities, they can have a territorial base or not, they can be urban or rural, they may be discriminated against or discriminate against others. The important thing to remember is that they have made an accommodation with the state. Over time, the groups trade in their distinct forms of political organisation for the right to retain cultural, linguistic or religious practices within a state; they do not seek autonomy or self-determination. The future of such groups is in constant negotiation with other groups within the overall political arena of the state. In general, ethnic groups have made their peace with the state and accept its authority on political issues. It should be made clear, however, that ethnic

groups today can attempt to reassert tribal identities in the future if states attempt to destroy their cultural, economic, territorial or religious base. This is one of the major factors in the rise of nationalism throughout the world, and will be discussed in more detail below.

Minorities. Any identifiable group that does not constitute a majority within a state can be classed as a minority, although it may also be a racial, tribal, ethnic, or religious group. While minorities may or may not have their fair share of power, the term is often used to refer to groups that do not have political power and thus have limited access to economic opportunities and social services. Thus, majority groups that do not have power are often thought of as minorities (such as Indians in Guatemala, Bolivia or Peru; Oromo in Ethiopia; Hutu in Burundi).

Nations. A nation is a group of people with a strong cultural and political identity that is both self-defined and acknowledged by others. Nations are defined as those groups who have exercised political control over their destinies at some point in the past and still see such control as a possible future strategy. For example, nations retain the sociopolitical institutions necessary to govern themselves. They can either have conquered other nations or have been conquered themselves. State boundaries rarely reflect the areas traditionally occupied by nations. The term 'nation-state' reflects more the desire of many elites and politicians to create new identities that correspond with current political boundaries than it does the reality of peoples or environments anywhere in the world.

States. The term 'state' commonly refers to a country, a political entity with clearly recognised boundaries. The specific name of the country is often used to refer collectively to those who live within the boundaries (Yugoslavians, Germans, Americans and so on). While this works fairly well for Western states, it does not reflect the attitudes of residents of countries such as Guatemala, Sudan, or Burma. The boundaries of most states were created by European colonial powers and have little meaning for many peoples who are divided by them, or who live within them along with many other peoples. The boundaries of states have rarely been created by the peoples who live within them; few peoples have been consulted about whether they wish to belong to a state or not. Furthermore, most states in the world have been created since World War II, whereas most peoples trace back their history for centuries if not millennia. Not even a handful of states contain only one distinct people; most contain dozens, many have hundreds. In short, while the nation-state myth persists, virtually every state in the world is multinational. It is this reality, and the refusal of states to acknowledge it, that is a major cause for the rise of nationalism.

Within the overall discussion of the terminology used to describe peoples around the world, the choice of term is less important than

that it should imply that the group referred to has the following characteristics in common.

1 A shared culture and history. However, this need not exclude the effects of outside influences (such as state boundaries that divide, religious conversion, educational programmes or differential integration into or contact with state-level or international social, economic, or political systems).

2 Agreement regarding boundaries of the lands which it has traditionally occupied and to which it claims group rights. Each people possesses oral and, increasingly, written histories of its ties to an area, shared sacred or historically significant sites, and sets of customs regulating access to land or other resources. Rules of access can change over time, however, through complex negotiations. In some instances, rights to lands or resources may have evolved in such a way that they can be shared by more than one people.

3 A shared language. Language is extremely important to group identity. More than one people, however, can speak the same language (for example, the Tutsi and Hutu in Ruanda and Burundi).

4 A socio-political organisation which pre-dates that of the state and which remains distinct from the bureaucratic structure of the state. This aspect is key to the definition, because it indicates that peoples have local-level and group-level political institutions which are independent from those of the state and which can be used to organise separate economic, social and political activities. It is precisely these institutions that, at best, are considered redundant to those of the state, or, at worst, direct threats to the legitimacy of the state. When peoples lose these institutions, I would argue that they become ethnic groups.

In this issue, then, it is important to distinguish between nations/peoples (groups that have in the past and still retain distinct political institutions) and ethnic groups (that have agreed to pursue group political interests within the larger state system). Both of these types of groups have been asserting their rights increasingly during the past thirty years. However, while the basis for the assertions and perhaps even many of the goals are similar for both nations and ethnic groups, the institutional and group resources available to each are quite different.

Centralisation of state power and the rise of nationalism

The majority of states in the world (of which there are nearly 170) have

been created since the end of World War II. Most have no basis for existence except the boundaries mutually agreed upon (often only after considerable conflict) by colonial powers. These states, as well as most of those created earlier, are empires; they are all multinational.

There are about 600 million nation peoples throughout the world who fit the above definition. (I do not include here any nations who control a state.) They are divided among more than 10,000 nations. While there are probably an equal or even greater number of people who belong to ethnic groups, there are far fewer ethnic groups worldwide. Within the context of states some of these groups (both nation and ethnic) are minorities, others are majorities. Some are quite large in absolute terms: the Kurds in the Middle East and the Oromo in Ethiopia number about 20 million people each; as such, each is larger than about three-quarters of the member states of the UN.

Nations account for most of the world's cultural diversity. They represent just over 10 per cent of the world's population, but have claims to some 30-40 per cent of the earth's surface area and resources. Nations have always existed on the peripheries of states. Historically states either assimilate (make into ethnic groups, for example) or eliminate nations or force them to flee into even more remote areas. At times, nations have been allowed to continue to exist because they serve as useful buffers between states or empires.

Global colonisation from 1492 to World War II brought nations of the world into contact with the West. Conflict over land and resources, language, religion, and local autonomy marked the colonial experience from the outset. Many people died during periods of contact and nations were reduced to pitifully small shadows of their former size and strength. Since 1900, but especially since World War II, the populations of nations have increased substantially. This is precisely the period when states have been established throughout the world. Thus, most of the world's states were created at the same time as nations were beginning to re-establish their former populations and social and political institutions, and to push for greater autonomy. The creation of new states during decolonisation, in retrospect at least, was rationalised by the departing colonial powers as a new arena within which the different peoples could negotiate over the turf of the state. Such battles, it was thought, would not seriously threaten international order or pose serious challenges to foreign trade or relations. From the point of view of the colonial powers, it really did not matter who gained power in the new states, as long as they continued to talk and do business with the West.

Nations, however, had a different experience in the post-colonial period. Some peoples who believed they stood to gain through the newly independent states, such as the Kikuyu in Kenya, shifted their political activities and aspirations to the state area. Other groups realised that they did not stand a chance to gain political power within the new states, so they began to fight for independence or autonomy (for example, the Mbundu in Angola). Many peoples were not aware of the political significance of decolonisation on their group (for example, Indians throughout the Americas). They always had been, and thought that they always would be, excluded and relatively isolated from the state system. Finally, some groups negotiated autonomy as a condition of independence (such as tribal groups in Burma), to see their autonomy taken away by dominant groups subsequent to independence. However, many of these groups are increasingly dissatisfied by their current position *vis-à-vis* the state.

A similar situation is developing with ethnic groups throughout the world. Many (particularly groups in Eastern Europe, the USSR, the PRC and Europe) find that they are being discriminated against within the state system. In short, they receive little in return for the accommodations they have made and the resources they have given.

Since World War II, many factors have affected the continued willingness of nations to accept the legitimacy of states. First, the 'nationalism' of new states has been created and dominated by only the larger or more militant nations. Furthermore, government officials in new states are characterised less by notions of 'citizenship' or 'public service' than by self interest. Those who control states make the laws in their own image (usually in their own language and in accordance with their culture) as well as in their own interests. Those who control new states control foreign investment and assistance (most, in fact, is military assistance and reinforces the power of those who rule), fix local commodity prices and control exports. These sources of income usually account for two-thirds of state budgets and, along with the final source of state revenue—tax—make government the most financially rewarding enterprise.

Development, in particular, is a major threat not only to the land and resource rights of nation peoples, but to their very survival. Many industrial processes that have become highly regulated in certain countries now endanger the lands and health of nations. For example, tribal groups working as labourers in South African asbestos plants were not aware of the health dangers of asbestos. Some Third World

states have welcomed the hazardous wastes of the industrialised world, and elites simply dump it on the lands of unsuspecting nations. In 1988, the President of Benin decided to place a dump for European toxic waste in the middle of the area where opposition nations live. Only international criticism halted the project.

Other industrial hazards can threaten the very way of life of nations. The Chernobyl explosion abruptly ended the traditional way of life for the Sami of northern Scandinavia. All the foods they ate or sold, including reindeer, fish, herbs, berries and mushrooms, were contaminated. The states involved—Sweden particularly, but also Norway and Finland—refused to allow the Sami to sue the USSR for compensation, because they use nuclear energy themselves and did not want such a precedent to be set.

Another cause of increasing nationalism is the invasion of remote areas and the expropriation of resources found there in the name of the state. Usually profits only accrue to those who rule. Since World War II, one-sided resource investigations begin with satellite and over flight reconnaissance, and with helicopters landing to take samples. Such probes have been relentless because it has become increasingly apparent that the Earth's resources are finite, and those individuals, states and corporations that can lay claim to these increasingly scarce resources stand to gain considerably.

Thus, under the guise of progress and development, the previously guaranteed constitutional (paper) rights to the lands and resources of nations are dismissed. If groups resist they are destroyed: it is no accident that more nation groups have been destroyed in the twentieth century with the drastic increase in states than during any other century. Small nations often abandon all claims to land and resources and try to avoid contact altogether. However, because many nations have already been forced into remote areas, there is no longer anywhere else to hide. Those who cross state borders become unwelcome refugees.

The case of Brazil demonstrates the problems of small nations. One Brazilian Indian nation has disappeared per year since 1900. In the past twelve months, Indians from eight groups have been killed by miners, ranchers, construction workers, farmers and timber merchants. Indians are in the way. The Yanomami of northern Brazil, the largest relatively uncontacted Indian nation in Brazil, are a good example. They number, at most, some 9,000 people; yet within the past two years more than 45,000 miners have illegally invaded their land. So far, more than 100 Yanomami have been killed by the miners; as many as three

per day are dying from measles, malaria and hepatitis introduced by the miners. The state's response has been to protect the illegal miners and to evict any people (doctors, anthropologists, human rights activists or missionaries) prepared to help the Yanomami. In addition to leaving illegal gold miners in place, Brazil has reduced the Yanomami's land area by 70 per cent to facilitate the 'legal' extraction of gold.

While there are exceptions, small nations can rarely defend their homelands from invasion. Out of over 10,000 nations, only the larger nations—perhaps 500–1000—could defend themselves physically if they had weapons and if they chose to fight. These groups have taken up arms increasingly in the past two decades as they have seen their political and cultural autonomy, as well as their resource base, curtailed. Such factors threaten the very survival of such groups. Of the 120 or so wars taking place throughout the world, more than 80 per cent involve nations.

Since World War II there have been an estimated 5 million casualties from these conflicts, which are referred to, incredibly, as 'low intensity warfare'. Most of the casualties are women, children and the aged; and there are probably far greater numbers of civilian casualties than this figure indicates. The vast majority of the 15 million recognised refugees in the world today are nation peoples who have fled nation or state conflicts. In addition to those peoples who flee across international borders, another 100 million, again mostly nation peoples, are displaced from the lands that they have traditionally occupied, either as a result of direct conflict with the state or of state development programmes that deny the rights of nations to land or resources.

This situation does not appear to be improving. In 1988, an estimated 100,000 nation peoples were killed in nation/state conflicts, and these deaths are just the tip of the iceberg. At least two million have also been forced to flee their homes as a result of such conflicts. Even more have fled from the encroachment of development programmes on their traditional homelands. Even if there was unoccupied land available to them, people who flee from their areas do not know how to manage the new resource base sustainably. This often results not only in environmental degradation, but malnutrition, disease and poverty. And all in the name of development.

It must be stressed that there does not now appear to be any state ideology that protects nations and promotes pluralism. Both left and the right, as well as religious and sectarian states, persecute nations. To put it simply, those who control states see nations as

threats to 'national' security. For example, during the past decade, resettlement and villagisation programmes have moved nation peoples around the landscape like pawns on a chess board. Programmes aimed at controlling nations have been undertaken by such diverse states as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey and the USA.

So what does this militarisation and conflict mean? First, that on average, Third World states are spending more money to engage in armed conflict with people who are supposedly citizens, or to prevent internal security problems, than on all other state expenditure combined. In addition, half of all Third World debt results from military or internal security spending. It should be noted that Third World elites have foreign cash deposits that equal Third World debt, although the relationship of these figures is not entirely unrelated. Foreign debts, for example, lead to austerity measures and provide the rationale for the further appropriation of the land and resources of nations. Such programmes inevitably lead to increased conflict and the need for even more weapons to prevent political instability and to protect the interests of those who rule.

There are other implications of conflict and militarisation, however. Because few nations are well-armed or well-organised, it is difficult for frustrated state officials to distinguish fighters from civilians, who increasingly become the targets of states. This in turn creates more hostility. Control of nation populations becomes a state priority while at the same time fuelling nation hostility and thus making control imperative. Relocation, resettlement and villagisation programmes are undertaken to ensure nation control by states, as well as the control of regions and resources. Within this context, food and famine become weapons; and displacement, genocide and the presence of refugees become commonplace.

The programmes which lead to such conflict are often undertaken in the name of progress and development, and usually depend on international sources of funding (bilateral, multilateral or even, to a lesser extent, NGO assistance). Ironically, these programmes not only lead to conflict, but also create dependent populations from formerly self-sufficient ones. For example, during the 1980s, the World Bank funded a development project in Burundi for the commercialisation and marketing of coffee. The Bank and state officials were concerned that much of the country's coffee was being sold illegally across the border in

Ruanda. On the surface the project appeared to be straightforward. However, national issues were at the heart of the reason why the state requested the project, and why coffee was being sold on the black market to Ruanda. Tutsi, who account for about 15 per cent of Burundi's population, control the state, fix the price paid to producers for coffee and control its marketing. Hutu, who comprise practically the rest of the population, are agriculturalists, many of whom produce coffee. The World Bank, by funding such a project, ignited an already delicate situation by allowing the minority government to exploit further the Hutu, who were the majority, but powerless. In a matter of weeks an estimated 25,000 were dead, and 50,000 had fled as refugees to Ruanda.

Most nations or ethnic groups who are fighting wars today desire one or more of the following conditions: autonomy, self-determination, representation, local political control, resource control, land rights, religious freedom or language rights. Few nations, however, are fighting for independence. Even in those cases where independence is the goal, it is because the state in question is perceived to be intransigent on any of the above-stated goals. Nations throughout the world want local control over issues that affect their survival. That is why their demands tend to focus on cultural and economic issues and the political autonomy necessary to ensure their guarantee.

The fate of the world's nations could well be decided within the next century. States can include the decision-making processes of such groups, at the very least those that most directly affect their survival. The dismantling of nations is not only unnecessary, but it is also quite costly to dominant societies. Development usually results in conflict, often wars; and wars cost money which creates debt. The debts then create a vicious circle of new development and taxes in addition to lower commodity prices or the displacement and extension of commercial agriculture into nation areas. Each of these tactics can cause further conflict, since at some point many larger groups would rather fight than abandon their homelands, earn less for their goods, or pay more taxes for services that they do not receive.

Perhaps equally important, however, is that top-down, state-run development often makes dependants of formerly self-sufficient nation populations. In an effort to assimilate nations into their social, economic and political structure, states destroy nation institutions that have provided a social net for those groups in the past. Nations often provided, through kin and other forms of institutional arrangements,

systems of sharing during times of need as well as health care, education, child care and care for the elderly. Most indebted states around the world cannot provide these services, particularly for nation groups who are relatively discriminated against within the state system.

Major advances in civilisation, from agricultural crops and methods of cultivation to art and philosophy, have historically come not from the elimination of nations but rather from the interaction between them. Even in the art of government, the influence of nations should not be overlooked. The League of Six Nations, a Native American confederation that existed prior to the creation of the USA, had a profound influence on the structure and framing of the US Constitution which is, arguably, one of the most influential documents of governance ever written.

Nations and ethnic groups do not belong in the dustbin of history. Their survival is essential to our own. If they disappear, we will all lose.

ARIEL: A REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LITERATURE

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NABIL GORGY

The well

Nabil Gorgy

Translated from the Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies

Nabil Gorgy, born in Cairo in 1944 of Christian Coptic parents, studied civil engineering at Cairo University and later worked as an engineer in and around New York. Since returning to Cairo, he has devoted himself to writing.

Unlike most of the writers of his generation, such as the late Yahya Taher Abdullah—who was a friend—the short story writer, Ibrahim Aslan, and newcomers, such as Said al-Kufrawi, Nabil Gorgy's writings cannot be said to exist within any given tradition of Arabic writing. Gorgy differs from most of his fellow writers in having travelled extensively in Europe, North and South America, India and Nepal; he is widely read both in modern fiction, and in Islamic Sufi literature, as well as in Egyptology, mythology and Far Eastern religions. While most of his writings are situated in Cairo, the background is seldom specified; his characters are from the middle class, often engineers like himself. Cosmopolitan in concept, Gorgy's stories are often difficult, even obscure ('The well' is something of an exception), and may employ techniques that are sophisticated and innovative. He is the least 'wordy' of writers and is often accused, by more conservative writers, of lacking a style; in fact, he possesses a sparse, direct style that is very much his own. He has given as his main literary influences a strange trio: the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges, the Japanese Yasunari Kawabata and the Moroccan-based US writer, Paul Bowles.

Nabil Gorgy's first two, unpublished, novels were experimental and erotic, and both narrative and dialogue were written in colloquial Egyptian Arabic. His publications include a short mystical novel, entitled al-Bāb (The Door, 1977) and the collection, 'Āshiq al-Muḥaddith ('The Lover-Narrator' and other stories, which included 'The well', 1984). A collection of his stories appeared in French translation in 1988. Among his recent, as yet unpublished, work is a novel, al-'Audah Ilā al-Ma'bad (Return to the Temple). A television play has been made of 'The well' in France, where the story appeared in French translation in Le Monde (Paris).

DENYS JOHNSON-DAVIES

Dr Imad took his binoculars from their case and looked in the direction of the dark smudge which, at this distance, looked so small and solitary. This was now the only hope he had. His car had broken down and he had all but run out of water in that bleak and never-ending desert.

'Perhaps there are some bedouin there,' he said in exasperation to his wife who was with him on their first trip together since their marriage a mere matter of months ago.

As this was Sumayya's first trip to the Oases area, also her first experience of these rough desert tracks, her reaction to the serious plight they were in

angered him. He ascribed it to her silliness, her inability to comprehend their situation.

'Perhaps it's a well or a tent,' he kept repeating as he increased his pace. They had begun to descend one of the moving sand dunes that stood between them and the extensive level ground that ended at that smudge he had seen through the binoculars.

'Why don't we wait beside the car till a lorry comes by?' said Sumayya, lifting up her feet with difficulty in the sea of sand, as she followed after him on an unmapped journey.

'And die alongside it?' answered Imad impatiently. 'Haven't we already been here the whole of last night and most of this morning, and the sun is now at its zenith, without a single vehicle passing by or our seeing a soul?'

He stopped for a while, then looked through the binoculars again: now a small tree could be seen at the edge of the dark-coloured smudge.

'We've missed the main track, Sumayya,' Imad repeated what he had already said to her a number of times. He had also on many an occasion throughout the night shown her on the map by the light of a torch the route which they should have followed and the other abandoned one which, for their bad luck, they had taken.

'We don't know how far off course we are.'

Suddenly Imad fell silent, for the effort of talking, together with that expended in making his way through the sand, also his state of exhaustion and anxiety, had made him dizzy. He put his hand to his heart, then sank back, seeking the support of Sumayya's arm, to seat himself on the sand.

From a dry throat he whispered: 'My blood pressure has dropped dangerously and I'm afraid I'm dying.'

After several minutes Sumayya helped him to his feet. 'Let's try to keep going.' She encouraged him to continue towards the goal he was striving for.

The husband and wife continued on their way, with Imad turning over in his mind all the likely possibilities of the situation, though without talking to Sumayya: he was tired out with talking. *It's a well or at least there could be some bedouin there who would know the way and direct us to the main road. It's difficult to accept dying in this way. Perhaps, though, there won't be anyone there. And if there is, would it be better for us to go together or for me to go first and for Sumayya to wait for me here?*

'Better take off the gold ring and watch, Sumayya,' Imad finally uttered, as he himself removed his watch and the gold chain that bore the word 'Allah'. Sumayya could find no reason for being frightened but she followed his advice so as not to increase further his bad temper.

Now the distance between them and his hope of being saved drew nearer. Alongside the tree which had now come into sight, a small, beautifully-coloured tent could be seen, around which grazed several goats. Distinctly visible, too, was a circular wall round a well. Though there was no sign of

water as such, the form of that stone circle stamped upon Imad's being the imprint of what he might come to regard as the happiest moment of his life.

'It's a well,' he said triumphantly. 'Thanks be to God.' The words issued from his mouth devoutly and Sumayya seemed to hear him mutter some prayers.

'I was sure. If only we'd tried to move off at dawn without all this debilitating waiting about!'

Now the complaining, condemnatory tone had returned. Sumayya said nothing, for she was weary of listening to him; he never stopped talking about himself, his skills and previous experiences.

For her, the joy of seeing the well and the tent was related to the strange charm of the place. Ever since the car had broken down, the possibility of their dying had not crossed her mind, for they at least still had a small jerrycan of water, and also a certain amount of food.

Apart from the journey's not having been in the least enjoyable to her from the very start, neither had been the preceding months. Imad knew everything, made every decision and forced it upon her. To begin with, she had tried to express her own opinion but in the end, to avoid serious troubles, she had given in to him.

Now only a few minutes separated them from the tent. There existed no sense of the presence of a human being there. Imad stretched out his hand to finger the dagger which up till now he had used to peel oranges and cut cheese. With an unconscious movement he made sure that it was in the sheath attached to the right side of his belt. 'Just to make sure,' he said to Sumayya, who had noticed. 'I don't see any dogs . . . Could the tent be deserted?' he asked her with a return of fear.

'But what about these goats?' he went on. But Sumayya was no longer listening, her attention held by the grandeur of the scenery. Who, amidst this vast desert, could be dwelling in the tent? How was he living?

Imad approached cautiously, clapping his hands several times and calling out. When no answer came, he glanced towards Sumayya. She went forward and gently pulled back the *kilim* that acted as a door. The place was filled with light. She looked around her till her gaze came to rest on something that she made out to be the face of a man asleep in one of the corners. Though most of his face was covered, she was able to distinguish the nobility of the features. No longer in the prime of life, he was nevertheless certainly under fifty years of age. She was conscious of Imad alongside her. He clapped his hands to waken the sleeping man. 'Gently, Imad,' she cautioned him, 'the man's asleep.'

Imad called out in a loud voice: 'We've got to wake him. Sheikh of the bedouin!'

With difficulty, the man opened his eyes and looked towards the tent opening where the two strangers stood in the bright light.

'Peace be upon you, Sheikh of the bedouin,' Imad greeted him from where he stood by the tent opening.

'And upon you be peace,' mumbled the man, having moved the head-cloth away from his face to reveal the handsome young features that had been hidden by the darkness and the covering.

The man attempted to rise but was unable to do so.

'The man's ill, Imad,' said Sumayya, moving towards him. Imad pulled her back roughly to stop her from any such rashness.

'Wait . . . O Sheikh of the bedouin, we've lost our way and we're almost out of water. Do you have any water? Do you know where the Farafra road is? Can you get us some petrol?'

The questions followed one upon the other with the man making no reply; he had closed his eyes again and dozed off.

'The man's ill, Imad.'

Sumayya entered the tent and knelt down beside the man.

'Peace be upon you.'

With great difficulty the man opened his eyes. 'And upon you be peace.' Again he tried in vain to raise himself.

'Are you ill?'

She put out her hand to feel his burning forehead that had broken out in sweat with the effort.

'This is another disaster,' Imad said to himself. 'Our rescuer needs rescuing.'

'Examine him, Imad,' Sumayya ordered.

Slowly Imad approached the two of them and, kneeling down beside the man, felt his face. 'What's the trouble? What do you feel, Hagg?'

He asked the questions hastily as he glanced at the contents of the tent which amounted to no more than a small box, a number of blankets, some firewood and two plastic jerrycans. He stretched out his hand towards one of them and lifted it up to make sure it was full. Assured by its weight, he asked: 'Is there water in the well?'

'Yes,' the man answered.

'Do you know the road to Farafra?'

'Yes.'

'Where are we? Is there any army camp nearby? Do you know anyone who might come to our rescue?'

The man repeated his attempt to raise himself. 'The camp,' he finally uttered, 'is about two hours' walk from here, westwards.'

Imad's mind was now set at rest. He stood up and indicated to Sumayya that they should leave.

'The man's ill, Imad. You must do something for him.'

'The Hagg has a fever and we don't have any medicine. Let's try to get to the army camp and on our way back we can pass by him.'

* 'Hagg': literally 'pilgrim', the word is also used as a term of respect to an older person.

'You don't know where this camp is. We're safe now, so what's the hurry? Do we have any medicine in the car that could help him?'

'Do you realise the distance the car is from here?'

Once again the man opened his eyes and they met Sumayya's. Disturbed for an instant, her eyes reflected the passing gleam of the look he gave her.

'We must save him,' Sumayya insisted.

'There's nothing wrong with him, just a slight temperature. We must hurry before the sun sets.'

'Are we going to leave him here to die?'

'He won't die. Some of his bedouin relatives will come along. There's no time to be lost.'

The man closed his eyes, moving his head away from this exchange of words; perhaps he had lost consciousness.

'Do you know where you're going?' Sumayya asked Imad in a tone full of rejection.

'Yes--the way he described it, it's two hours to the camp.'

'What camp? It's better to spend the night here and to set off in the morning.'

'No, we must reach the camp today.'

Perhaps the man gave a moan of pain or maybe it was a feverish shudder. Going out of the tent and standing by the entrance, Imad employed the compass, from which he was never parted, to determine the direction of the north and thus where the west lay. Then, having found the direction and making ready to go, he said: 'Hurry up.'

'I shan't be going,' said Sumayya in a firm voice. 'Pass by me on your way back so as to take me with you. I'm no longer capable of walking.'

'Of course you can. Are you going to stay on alone with this stranger?' Imad enquired with disgust. 'I'll wait for you outside the tent.'

'No, I'll wait until you come back,' Sumayya spoke this time in a voice that allowed him no possibility of doubting her intention. Though she had said little he knew from her tone that there was no point in trying to dissuade her.

'You're mad. This is an act of madness,' he said in a fury. Then, as one who clears himself of all responsibility because of the patient's refusal to take the medicine, he added: 'It's up to you.'

He walked away.

Sumayya spent the whole of that night awake beside the bedouin, looking after him and moistening her scarf with water so as to bring down his temperature.

Thus the days passed while she nursed him back to health. As for Imad, he did not return.

If Samuel Beckett had been born in Czechoslovakia we'd still be waiting for Godot

Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" is banned in Czechoslovakia.

In fact, any writing that differs from the opinions of the Czech government is banned in Czechoslovakia.

Luckily, Beckett does not live in Czechoslovakia, but what of those writers who do?

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**Index on Censorship
for crying out loud.**

NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O

Matigari as myth and history: an interview

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer.

Born in 1938 in Limuru, Kenya, he was educated at Alliance High School, Kenya, Makerere University, Uganda and Leeds University in Britain. In 1968 he returned to Kenya as a special lecturer in English at the University of Nairobi, a position from which he resigned in 1969 in protest at government actions to curb political opposition, including the decision to close the university as a means of controlling student dissent. After a period as Writer in Residence at Makerere University and as Visiting Professor at Northwestern University in the USA, he returned to the University of Nairobi in 1971, where he was among those advocating the abolition of the English department as a means of promoting the centrality of African culture. Ngũgĩ began to write in Gĩkũyũ, his mother tongue, for the scripting of plays to be staged by workers and peasants at the Community Education and Cultural Centre in Kanĩrũthũ, Kenya, in 1976-77. A production of Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want) was banned in 1977 (the Kanĩrũthũ Centre was itself razed to the ground in 1982), and Ngũgĩ was arrested and detained without trial in December 1977. On his release in December 1978, he was barred from resuming his professorship at Nairobi. His one-year detention (an experience he relates in his writer's prison diary) confirmed his commitment to using the Gĩkũyũ language as a weapon of resistance, and while in prison, he inscribed on toilet paper his first Gĩkũyũ-language novel, *Caĩtaani Mũtharabainĩ* (Devil on the Cross). Since 1977, all his creative work has been in Gĩkũyũ, and *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) marked his farewell to English as the vehicle for even his non-fiction writing. In 1982, while on a visit to London, Ngũgĩ was warned that he would be arrested on his return to Nairobi, as part of the wave of repression following the attempted coup against President Daniel Arap Moi in July 1982. He has since lived in exile.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's publications include the collection of short stories, *Secret Lives* (1975); the novels, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), and *Caĩtaani Mũtharabainĩ* (1980; translated as *Devil on the Cross*, 1982); the plays, *The Black Hermit* (1968), *The Trial of Dedan Kĩmathi* (co-authored with Mĩcere Gĩthae-Mũgo, 1976), *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (co-authored with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩrĩũ, 1977; translated as *I Will Marry When I Want*, 1982), and *Maitũ Njugĩra* (Mother Sing For Me, 1981); *Detained: a writer's prison diary* (1981); and the essays, *Homecoming: essays on African and Caribbean literature, culture and politics* (1972), *Writers in Politics* (1981), *Barrel of a Pen: resistance to oppression in neo-colonial Kenya*

(1983) and *Decolonising the Mind: the politics of language in African literature* (1986). He has also written several children's books in Gikũyũ, and his works have been translated into over twenty languages.*

*

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's latest novel, Matigari ma Njirũũgi, was written from exile in London in 1983 and published in Kenya in the original Gikũyũ in October 1986. Based partly on an oral story about a man searching for a cure for an illness, it is addressed to a 'reader/listener', thus emphasising its oral qualities, and is said to be set in no particular country and at no fixed time. In the novel, the character, Matigari ma Njirũũgi (literally 'the patriots who survived the bullets'), returns from the forest after the armed struggle for independence, having defeated the colonial Settler Williams and his African accomplice, John Boy. Burying his arms, Matigari seeks his home and family, only to find a land in the grip of fear, and extremes of wealth and poverty, owned by multinationals and governed by a corrupt, Western-oriented elite led by 'His Excellency Ole Excellence' and the ruling KKK party, whose emblem is a parrot. The house Matigari comes to reclaim has been usurped by the sons of Settler Williams and John Boy. Aided by an orphan, Mũriũki, a prostitute, Gũthera and a striking worker, Ngarũro wa Kĩrĩro, Matigari goes in search of Truth and Justice, acquiring legendary status throughout the country following altruistic deeds and 'miraculous' escapes from prison and mental hospital—escapes which are ironically revealed to have been effected by human sacrifices rather than divine intervention. After an unsuccessful search, during which Ngarũro is killed by police, Matigari realises that 'Justice for the oppressed comes from a sharpened spear', that the enemy can be defeated only by words of truth and justice backed by the power of armed force. Unable to retrieve his buried arms, after setting fire to his house Matigari is chased and wounded by police and, together with Gũthera, flees into the river, and probable death. It is left to the orphan, Mũriũki, to retrieve Matigari's arms and continue the struggle.

As Ngũgĩ writes in his preface to the English translation,† after publication of the novel in Kenya, intelligence reports suggested that a man named Matigari was roaming the country making subversive demands, and there were orders for his immediate arrest. Subsequently realising its mistake, the government banned Matigari ma Njirũũgi in February 1987.

Maya Jaggi asked Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o to speak about aspects of Matigari, in London, on publication of the English translation in May 1989.

* For a Literary Profile of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o by Simon Gikandi, see *Third World Quarterly* 11(1) January 1989, pp. 148–56.

† *Matigari*, translated from the Gikũyũ by Wangũi wa Goro, Oxford: Heinemann International, 1989.

Historical allusions in *Matigari*: their significance for the present

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: The character of Matigari can be seen first in a general sense as representing the collective worker in history. That is why the novel is in fact not set in any particular country, though it is clearly set in Africa. In the sequence of the novel, Matigari lays down his arms and returns to claim his collective inheritance, only to find that it has been taken by those who were part of the same set of social forces he had struggled against. Yet he does not seek out and challenge the new occupants of his house immediately. Instead he travels around the country posing questions about Truth and Justice. Again and again he returns, in a song, to the central paradox of history, in which the producer is reduced to begging while the parasite is elevated to a position of power over the producer. Why, he wonders, are the producers seldom the ones who control their own wares? In posing such questions, Matigari is, in my view, addressing a fundamental issue of the twentieth-century world. He is asking what is the truth of history, since history as we know it does not contain the fact of this inherent injustice. This question is important everywhere in the world today where the paradox has not been resolved—whether in Africa or elsewhere—and its relevance goes beyond the history of a particular country or a particular period.

Even in terms of African—or specifically Kenyan—history, the collective nature of Matigari is important. There is a scene, for instance, where Matigari confronts those who have occupied his house. When they ask him who he is, he replies that he has always been there, that he was there at the time of the Portuguese, back in the fifteenth century, and at the time of the Arabs and of the British, though their response is that they were not asking for history lessons! Again, when Matigari says that he worked all the industries and all the farms, that he made all the clothes and built all the houses, this is not to be taken literally! This is an important dimension of the novel and so far, of the critics I have read, few have seen this aspect. They have been treating Matigari as though he were a highly individualised character inhabiting a specific historical period—perhaps because they have been conditioned by the realism of the previous novels to expect realistic characters—instead of seeing his character as more the representative type you might find in a myth.

There is, of course, another side to the novel, what you might call the 'particular' side, which obviously has allusions to the armed struggle for independence in Africa. This took place essentially in the 1950s in Algeria and Kenya, and the novel specifically calls to mind the Mau Mau struggle of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army. An article I wrote in 1983, just before I wrote *Matigari*, was entitled 'Mau Mau is Coming Back' (in *Barrel of a Pen*), but what I really meant in the novel is that the spirit of Mau Mau is still very

much alive in Kenyan society. I think many more people are now looking back to that period of the 1950s, not with a view to returning to it, but just in order to learn the lessons arising from that period, lessons about the achievement as well as the failures of the Mau Mau intervention in the history of Kenya.

There are, in fact, two sides on this issue. On one side there are members of those forces opposed to the neo-colonial structures and arrangements in Kenya, who have begun to look into Kenyan history, and derive inspiration from the whole tradition of resistance. The resistance theme is becoming very important in intellectual discussions on the fate of Kenya—its present and future. And while Mau Mau is one of the highest aspirations of that theme of resistance, its roots go back at least to the fifteenth century, with the struggle against the Portuguese. So Mau Mau is a central theme of present-day Kenyan political debate.

On the other side, there are those who are part of the social forces represented by the present Kenyan regime, who also symbolise historically those forces that sided with the colonial regime. In Kenya more than in other countries, the continuity between the colonial period and the neo-colonial period is very stark. Sometimes this continuity is marked by identity of the actors whose role has been in supporting the external forces dominating Kenya in both colonial and neo-colonial periods. A good example is President Moi himself, who in 1954 at the height of the Mau Mau struggle, was appointed into the colonial settler legislature. You can see the dichotomy: on the one hand there were those who were engaged in armed struggle to overthrow colonialism, and on the other was Moi literally helping in the drafting and formulation of policies designed to defeat Mau Mau. There are other continuities in Kenyan history. For example, the Kenyan army is a virtual continuation of what used to be called the King's African Rifles, which were used in the struggle against the Mau Mau armed forces. So the Kenyan army has been brought up in traditional anti-people practices inherited from colonialism, and which continue to the present.

Now, those forces do not want to hear about Mau Mau. When the debate about Mau Mau became very heated, and almost engulfed the whole of Kenyan society in 1984, President Moi himself banned public debate and discussion on the issue. Another example of this anti-Mau Mauism in the rhetoric and practices of the present regime is the imprisonment of the historian, Maina wa Kinyatti for six-and-a-half years. He has now been released, but is in exile, and his imprisonment symbolises that particular anti-Mau Mau trend in the present regime. Superficially, the regime may fear the possibility of armed struggle being waged against it. But in a deeper sense, it sees the threat in the implications of the social and political goals of Mau Mau. Since the Mau Mau struggle and the Kenyan people's struggle was for complete independence and complete freedom—meaning the capacity of people to control their wealth, their values and so on—this goal of course goes against present trends in the

Kenyan regime's policies. So what they fear from Mau Mau more than the possibility of an armed struggle is the political, economic and cultural implications of that debate.

The novel's theme of resistance and re-arming

What *Matigari* is doing—at least in intention—is posing a challenge. About three-quarters of the novel is concerned with a quest for Truth and Justice. Matigari asks: 'Is there a solution to our problems, without violence? There must be another way.' I see this as a question of democracy, with democratic participation clearly being an important theme in the novel.

In relation not just to Kenya, but to Africa as a whole, *Matigari* is saying that neo-colonialism must end because Africa cannot possibly develop or find its true liberation while neo-colonialism holds sway; and a very important aspect of neo-colonialism is, of course, democratic repression. This is so because, without a real commitment to social change—economically, politically and socially—people will inevitably become increasingly alienated from whichever social group is in power. That group in power then has no alternative but to resort to force: either you bring social change, or you use force to prevent it. And if you use force, the question is, what options are you giving the population? If you constantly repress the people (and in the case of Kenya, the level of repression is very high), what are you telling the people to do? So, although in mythic form, the novel is still very analytic; it is asking what options are available. And it is saying that if you follow a certain course, then you must accept the consequences of that course, because you cannot have your cake and eat it: you cannot close all avenues of debate and stifle democracy, yet not expect that people will find ways—whatever those ways—of fighting against that oppression.

In another sense, the most fundamental question being posed in the novel is that of resistance and mass intervention in history. *Matigari* is saying that people have to intervene in their own history one way or another, but the question is how to do so when the structures are so undemocratic. The form intervention takes in such circumstances will always depend on a number of factors, such as the level and intensity of repression, and the capacity of the people to organise themselves. It could take the form of, say, mass demonstrations or mass uprisings. But whatever the form, it would have the character of what has been described as the forcible entry of the masses into history. It is not a question of making revolutions for the people, but of people themselves making their own revolutions, not only to change the present economic and political arrangements, but also to bring about a sense that they can be masters of their own environment; to make them confident that they can control the world in which they live.

In terms of the ideas of disarming and re-arming in the novel, once again,

the important conception is the collective nature of *Matigari*. National independence was a very important stage in people's struggle, but it also often took the form—in most countries—of a disarming of the people in every way: mentally, spiritually, economically and politically. To try to depoliticise people is a form of disarming them, making them less alert; at independence, people were told that politics were now over, and that it was possible to achieve development without politics. To tell people that neo-colonialism and subservience to the West—being exploited and oppressed—are the answer, or to tell them to follow blindly in the footsteps of a person who is leading them to the grave*—these are attempts to disarm the people. So it is important to see the question of arms and re-arming in terms of its total economic, political, cultural and social implications.

The continuing role of literature in exposing neo-colonialism

I address a particular theme in all my works: the liberation of the people, economically, politically, culturally and psychologically. In other words, if there is any one theme in my works it is one of the liberation of the collective human spirit. For as long as this has not happened, and for as long as there are forces conspiring towards the continuing domination of the human spirit, so long shall I continue to address that subject. For, I do not go outside history for my themes; they are derived from history and current social practice.

The fundamental question posed by *Matigari*—of the paradox of history—is not only relevant to the current phase of neo-colonialism. Even without neo-colonial structures, if it were another phase of our history where this paradox has not been resolved, *Matigari* would still have relevance. However, this is not to diminish the importance of neo-colonialism: it is a very important theme and one which, in my view, has not been sufficiently examined by writers. What is needed is for us in Africa and the Third World to become as conscious of neo-colonial arrangements and their economic, political and cultural implications, and to be horrified by them with the same force, determination and sincerity, as we were *vis-à-vis* colonialism.

The tremendous struggle going on in the world today is the struggle for the mind. People can be made to view history in a way which is sometimes against their very interests. You find this tendency in newspapers, radio, television. People are bombarded with words, images, scholarship of different kinds, all having more or less one aim, to rationalise the present-day inequalities between nations and races, and within nations, and to rationalise the differences or contradictions between the majority who produce and the minority who control. All this activity is not purely because newspaper editors, television owners and those who control academic establishments crave mental exercise. The

* A reference to the philosophy of President Moi of Kenya, embodied in the slogan of 'Nyayoism': 'follow in my footsteps'.

object of the struggle is the mind of the people. In such a situation, the role of literature—progressive literature—is vital in continuing to draw pictures that correspond to the reality—particularly if they are drawn from the standpoint of the majority of the people. It is very important that people in the democratic and progressive academic and literary worlds continue to create images from the people's standpoint.

Matigari as oral narrative

There are various symbolic levels in *Matigari*, and I was trying, using a very simple narrative technique, to go beyond all that had been attempted in my previous novels, in terms of this symbolic treatment. I found, in this context, that the conventions of the oral narrative solve a number of problems—problems, for instance, of time and space.

On one level, *Matigari* is a simple narrative, a sequence where events follow one another in an apparently linear way. But it has a lineality which, in fact, negates the linear sequence of events. In an oral narrative, characters can travel from spot 'A' to spot 'B' in a matter of seconds, or they can travel to and fro in time. For example, at the beginning, Matigari is seen as travelling across many hills and valleys, but it is only 10 o'clock by the time he reaches his destination. Or, later, he says that he has travelled through the country, using trains, buses, *matatus*,* but you do not actually see him riding a bus or train. He also goes into the wilderness. Yet, in terms of a specific time-scale, this probably only takes place within a period of about three days.

I had achieved this break with linear time in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* through using multiple narrative voices, and flashbacks which were really seen as continuous in the present, where past, present and future were all contained in the same moment. The present is heavy with the past and also pregnant with the future; that is the notion I was trying to capture in these two earlier novels. But even those techniques become restrictive because of the realism which is being assumed. Only by dispensing with time and space in the manner of an oral narrative, could I explore the possibilities of breaking with linear time without recourse to these devices. I also realised that the assumptions of the oral narrative, and dispensing with time and space, are not as arbitrary as they might at first seem, given how the mind works. It is the oral narrative that follows the structure of the mind: at one moment, when I mention, for example, the word 'home' to you, even as we are talking, your mind can travel to any other location and be back here. You can travel home, recover images of your mother and father, and return, while never having left! We can even quickly return to images of our childhood. As people talk, there

* *Matatu*: originally an unlicensed 'pirate' taxi; now a recognised form of transport.

are multiple references—to their childhood, to the spaces they have occupied, to their experiences, and so on. So this is not an arbitrary narrative device.

The oral narrative has an obvious and intended symbolic dimension. It is very simple, and there are certain motifs that are repeated, some contained in the chorus or the songs. Say the hero is going in search of a lost person in the next country or town, or even in the next world, and he travels around asking for the way, he may ask in the form of a song, so that the song may contain the repeated motif. *Matigari* employs motifs in this way, using different words, but the same motif.

The novel is really a symbolic poem with multiple references, but I have seen reviewers trying to fit it into the restrictive jacket of a realist portrait—even though the novel does not pretend to be that at all. *Matigari*, for example, says at one point that he has been looking for truth among the nests of birds in the trees. I have been very fascinated by various critical readings of the novel, where people have not been able to respond to these symbolic levels, despite their being so obvious.

The reception of the novel in Kenya, and its subsequent banning:

I was greatly saddened by the banning of the novel in Kenya because, whatever the social implications of the novel, I was very much looking forward to discovering people's reactions to its literary qualities. As a writer, I was much more fascinated by this aspect of the novel than by any other. I wondered if people would respond differently to it as compared with, say, *Devil on the Cross*.

Unfortunately, I could not be there to see the reaction, but the pattern that was beginning to emerge was very interesting. Two or three weeks before *Matigari* was due to be published formally in October 1986, it was already selling in the road-side bookshops in Nairobi, so some people must have smuggled copies from the printers long before publication date. A publishers' rep was sent to verify this situation, and the publishers then bought up all the street copies, so we do not know how many copies had already been sold before the publishers intervened. And, of course, little did the publishers know that the government itself would interfere with the formal bookshops, when the novel was banned in February 1987. As to sales, about 4000 copies of the novel were printed, and about 700 1000 remaining copies were seized by the government from the publishers' warehouse. So around 3000 had at least travelled to the bookshops. What is difficult to estimate is how many copies had been sold before the police raided the bookshops. From what I could gather, though, sales had been brisk and, of course, every copy would have a multiple readership.

Though the period was too short for a detailed assessment of people's reactions, in terms of dissemination and reception there is no doubt that *Matigari*

was received very well. Like the previous novel, *Devil on the Cross*, it was read on public transport and at social gatherings, such as eating places, people's homes, and so on. It is also quite clear that people started talking about Matigari as though he were a living person, and perhaps the banning of the novel was prompted by the extent to which people were talking about this individual, Matigari—some of them even calling him 'Mzee' as a term of respect. He has actually become quite a character: someone rang me, trying, I think, to find out about the English translation of the novel. Speaking in the clandestine language that Kenyans are used to, he asked: 'How is the old man?' For a time, I did not understand, but then he continued: 'We hear that the old man has learnt English, and that he might be going for an examination on the thirty-first of May.' Then it clicked, since that was the date of the UK publication, and we started having a conversation about *Matigari*!

Language and translation: the future for African languages

Had there not been an intervention by the government, the same pattern of translation would have been followed as occurred with *Devil on the Cross*. *Matigari*, originally in Gĩkũyũ, would have been translated immediately into Kiswahili and then into English, or any other language in the world. Instead, only the English translation is available now, although someone has just finished translating it into Japanese. (It is a translator who has learnt Gĩkũyũ, and has translated directly; she wanted to complete the Japanese version before the English translation came out, so that she would not be influenced by what she read in English.)

We have now, in fact, in the contract of the originating publisher, closed the option for people to translate from the English, by insisting that *Matigari* must be translated directly from the Gĩkũyũ. Obviously, translators may check additionally with the English, but we have been very firm on this because there were loopholes in the case of *Devil on the Cross*: though the Swedish edition was translated from the Gĩkũyũ, the German and Russian translators used the English edition. The tendency has been to take the easy way out—through the English translation—which means that the work will become further and further removed from the original in terms of its spirit and meaning; a translation is also in a sense an interpretation, in its choice of words.

Now it has become even more imperative to translate directly from the original, because this translation is not mine, but Wangũi wa Goro's. One cannot assume, as in the case of *Devil on the Cross* (which was the author's translation), that the English version is equally the author's work—even his work as a translator. I do not want to put myself into a position where I feel that every book I write must also be translated by me; no author can commit himself or herself to that. The translations into English should be treated in the same way as those into German, French or Japanese, where I have no

direct say. Of course, with the English version I have a vested interest, because it is a language I understand. But nevertheless, once one has a good translator, they should be able to do the work. If they look hard enough, people will find ways around the problems of translating direct from the *Gikūyū*. There is no reason, for example, why people cannot collaborate on translations, with one person who knows the original language, and another who can use creatively the language into which it is being translated.

What becomes important is that authors, writers and academics must start responding to African languages. For example, in the United States, and all over the world, there are experts on Africa—historians, philosophers and so on—who do not know a single African language. It is only with regard to Africa where, once again, the continent is taken so much for granted that people assume they can become experts on the region without having to concern themselves with African languages. It is inconceivable the other way round, that there could be a scholar on, say, French history or French philosophy, who could not be bothered to learn the French language. Yet, it is taken for granted that you can know Africa through French or English or Portuguese—through the languages of the colonising powers—which carries yet more insults and injuries.

Ultimately, it is for the people of a particular language culture to open out their language in a literary way, because, if you look at the history of languages, it is not possible for anyone outside a particular language culture to initiate a way forward for that language. Admittedly, in some cases, missionaries have done more for African languages, by having people read the Bible in, say, *Gikūyū* or Ibo or Kiswahili, than African writers themselves—though the missionaries were not, of course, doing this for the sake of African languages or cultures. Nevertheless, it is for African writers to enhance their languages, literature and philosophy, just as writers have done for other cultures throughout the world.

The object is for colonial languages to occupy their proportionate position in society. English and French may remain minority languages, but they will at least not be the dominant languages for expressing African culture, and this will also affect the literature produced in those languages. There will be a more natural balance. It is important for us to remember that there have always been literary works in African languages. It is simply that the discussion of African literature since World War II has been dominated by literatures written in colonial languages. My concern is that this literature has even taken on the title of 'African Literature', completely obscuring the fact that there has been a history of literature written in African languages which, correctly speaking is African literature. This other, hybrid tradition should have another, more appropriate name.

What I think will happen is that the younger generation will probably experiment with African languages. As African writers find that they can communi-

cate and be published, and derive status as writers, even if they write in African languages, this will definitely increase their tendency to resort to African languages as the means of their creative expression. That is why I insisted on this direct translation clause, although my position now seems to be a minority position among practising African writers. Nevertheless, I still hold onto it very firmly. I see a situation where an increased focus on African languages in schools, universities and other institutes of learning will also mean increased attention to the art of translation. Because now, whereas many African people can handle at least two or three languages (in the case of Kenya, that means English, Kiswahili and whatever is their mother tongue), what has not been developed is their capacity in those three languages to a level where they would feel free to translate from one to another. So a combination of various forces should make for a breakthrough in literature written in African languages: a combination of publishers willing to invest, a government with pro-African language policies, writers willing to experiment in African languages, and translators who take pride in African languages—whether their own or not. But the primary responsibility is for the writers themselves.

RASHEED EL-ENANY

Poets and rebels: reflections of Lorca in modern Arabic poetry

García Lorca *

by *Badr Shākir al-Sayyāh*

In his heart is a stove
Whose fire feeds the hungry.
From its hell gushes forth water:
A flood purging the earth of evil.
Of flame his eyes weave a sail,
Whose threads they gather from the spindles of rain,
From eyes which emit fire,
From the breasts of mothers at the suckling hour,
From knives whence trickle the sweetness of fruit,
From midwives' knives which cut umbilical cords,
And from conquerors' knives chewing light.
His sail, moist like the moon;
Strong like a stone;
Swift like the twinkle of an eye.
Green like spring—
His sail, red with a dye of blood
Is like the sail of a child's boat,
Made from the pages of a book which he tore apart,
Filling, from its contents, the river with boats.
It is like Columbus' sail at sea,
Like Fate.

Lorca †

by *Maḥmūd Darwīsh*

Forgive me, O flowers of blood
That I dare address myself to you.
A sun, O Lorca, is in your hands,
And a cross clad in the fire of a poem.
They make nocturnal pilgrimage to you,
The most beautiful knights,
With martyred men and martyred women.

Such is the poet: an earthquake, a torrent of rain,
A hurricane. When he rumbles
The roads whisper to each other:

* From *'Unshūdāt al-Maṭar (The Rain Song, 1960)*.

† From *Awraq Zaytūn (Olive Leaves, 1964)*.

'His footsteps will pass this way,
Disperse, O stones!'

Such is the poet: music; a chanted prayer;
A breeze when he whispers.
He takes a beautiful girl with the gentleness of a god.
And to him the moons are a nest when he rests.

Spain is still the most wretched of mothers;
She let down her hair on her shoulders
And on the olive branches of a dark evening
She hung her swords.

At night the guitar player roams the roads
Singing in secret.
With your poems, O Lorca, he gathers charities
From the eyes of the poor.

The black eyes in Spain stare hard.
And mute is the speech of love.
A grave will the poet dig in his hands
If he utters a word.

Forgetfulness has forgot to erase your radiant blood
And thus in blood were covered the smiles of the moon.
The noblest of swords is a song of your composition;
A song about the gypsies.

The latest news from Madrid:
'The patient are sated with patience.'
Says the Wound. 'Julian was shot at night.
But the orange blossoms still diffuse their scent.'

The best news from Madrid
Will come tomorrow.

Lorca *

by *Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr*

Lorca is a fountain in a square;
A shady place for children at noon to repose;
A gypsy song;
A golden sun;
A summer night blessed;
A woman bearing twins;
A white lily
Rubbing its cheeks in the water;
Tower bells

* From *Ahlām al-Fāris al-Qadīm* (*Dreams of the Ancient Knight*, 1964).

In the belly of a fog
Near the solitary star;
Sometimes they sing and sometimes they sigh;
The leaves of Palm-Sunday;
Sugar candy;
A heart filled with limpid light;
Transparent ribs;
A naked chest of foam and smoke;
A banner for the brave.
Lorca is sweet like the harvest of sated bees;
Bitter like the sweet waters of the sea;
And thirsty like its waves.

On a still summer night
The poet became a legend.
The petty guards killed him.
The petty guards killed him.
He lay in a heap; a wound above the hill.
A decayed skull choked
With the blood of a weary heart,
And in the dew rusted away
The wooden body
And the buried hat.
As for the words sweet and bitter,
They flowed in a stream
Which began where you fell
And where with dust
Your mouth was filled
Until it slumbered in God's angry bosom,
Begging Him to forgive some stupid guards
Who killed the last of the Lord's sons.

Elegies of Lorca *

by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī

I

The boar gores the belly of the stag.
On his bed Inkidu dies,
Sad and forlorn,
As a worm dies in mud.
The fate of Luqmān befell him in the end,
And the fate of that seventh eagle of his.
The acts of this play are now complete:
Neither light nor life will you again greet.
For fair Nature has destined men to die
And for herself kept the living flame through the sequence of seasons.

* From *Al-Mawt fī al-Hayāt (Death in Life, 1968)*.

What, O queen of mine, can I say of my demise,
When the blue flame
I have not seen and to its distant parts have not been?

II

A city is enchanted,
On a river of silver and lemon erected:
No man is born at her thousand portals
And no man meets the fate of all mortals.
Surrounding her is a wall of gold,
And shielding her from wind an olive wood.
I saw her—worms
Eating my face, in my blocked and decayed grave.
‘Shall I return?’ I said to Mother Earth.
She laughed, shook off me the mantle of worms
And rubbed my face with an abundance of light.
I went back to my city, youthful and bedazzled
Gallop on the back of my green wooden horse.
At her thousand portals I yelled,
But together slumber had tied eye-lids
And the enchanted city drowned
In blood and smoke.

III

The sweet-scented lady
With the black eyes and ear-rings
Has herself adorned with lime leaves and with blossoms,
And with the water of the roses of fire
And the rain-drops of dawn has herself perfumed.
O Granada of happy childhood:
A paper-kite, a poem
Strung to this light
And rocking above the wall!
O Granada of the innocent days!
Eagerly she throws away her burden of the wind and of the stars,
She lies under the snowflakes on roof-tiles
Pointing in fear at her black hills
Whence on the backs of the horses of Death
Came the warring brothers
And sunk this house in blood.

IV

A bull of silk and velvet black
Bellows in the arena behind the horseman's back.
Its horns rise in the air,
Chasing the evening star
And stabbing the enchanted horseman.
There he lies with his broken sword,
Blood-besmeared, in the light:

THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY

Two red mouths, agape;
Red anemones.
At the foot of the mountain of superstition
Blood covers a willow tree.
O red fountain!
There is no henna in the markets of Madrid
Rub, I pray thee, with this blood the hands of my love.
O cry of a clownish crowd!
There he dies,
Whilst the bull, pierced in the arena, bellows full-throated.

V

To wash away the shame of forced death
He thrust the point of the sword
Into the heart of this night.
He fought till death
From street to street.
The villains caught up with him
And in his body planted daggers;
They cut the string which quivered in the sky
The green kite of infancy
Has fallen in the trenches of the enemy.
And orphaned Granada
Is now a slave for sale.
Who would buy 'A'isha? Who would buy the Phoenix?
A Babylonian princess captive
With ear-rings from the gold of the city enchanted -
Who would buy the princess?

VI

The city of necessity
Heralds the world and man.
Under the sky of her bare summer
I face loss and legend,
I face forgetfulness.
O perpetual flux!
The recurrent copies
In this big machine
Are eaten into by the rats.
O Parrot of the besotted King! O Mistress of the Sultan!
Climb the walls of muscums!
Make love to the reptiles!
Gamble with the head of this rebel!
There he is besieged from street to street
Chased by daggers.

Introduction

These four poems in translation¹ exemplify a widespread interest on the part of modern Arab poets in the Spanish poet, Federico García Lorca (1898- 1936). The poems have been selected because they are all explicitly devoted to Lorca, both in title and subject-matter. The Spanish poet is, however, invoked—whether by name or by association with his life or art—in innumerable other Arabic poems, a phenomenon which invites extensive study, and which this article will briefly explore.²

The composers of these poems are all eminent masters of the modernist movement in Arabic poetry, who started to write (with the exception of Maḥmūd Darwīsh who is of a younger generation) in the late 1940s or early 1950s, and reached their artistic maturity in the 1960s (incidentally, the period to which all four poems belong). Of the four poets, two (Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb and 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī) are Iraqi, while Darwīsh is Palestinian, and Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr is Egyptian. This national diversity (within the boundaries of Arabic culture) in itself suggests that the Arab interest in Lorca extends beyond individual affinities on the part of particular poets, into the realms of a literary phenomenon.

The meaning of Lorca to Arab poets cannot be explored without some acquaintance both with the life and art of the Spanish poet (and more importantly, the circumstances of his violent and premature death at the hands of the fascist Right in Spain), and with the socio-political background and concerns of modern Arabic poetry. Closer examination of the four individual poems will then serve to illustrate the way in which Lorca was regarded by the Arab poets.

Lorca against fascism

Lorca was executed by Nationalist forces outside his native Granada on the morning of 19 August 1936, at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Already a legendary figure in his life, his abrupt and bloody death at the age of thirty-eight could only have served to lift him to a still higher mythical plane. Lorca's poetry, with its surrealism, evocation of folk verse, sensuality and creation of its own mythology, does not lend itself readily to political interpretation. In the words of one critic, Lorca's work has 'no direct political meaning . . . The masses and what moved them as such did not interest him . . .'³ This view seems to be upheld by the poet's own dictum: 'I'll never be a politician, never! Like all the true poets I'm a revolutionary, but a politician - never!'⁴ Ian Gibson, Lorca's biographer, tells us that the poet was 'a liberal in the broadest sense of the word' and that, unlike many of his fellow-writers, 'he never joined a political party or identified himself with any particular left-wing group . . .'⁵

Thus a purely 'artistic' reading of the poet's work coupled with an all too literal adoption of the above statements might leave us wondering why the Nationalists cared to murder Lorca and why he became an emblem for the martyred poet-rebel to Arab poets and other intellectuals the world over. But it must be remembered that while Lorca stood aloof from direct political action, he saw himself as a 'revolutionary' in the manner of 'all true poets'. One sense in which his revolutionary nature can be understood is his identification in his early poetry with Granada's persecuted groups: Jews, Moors, negroes and gypsies.⁶ One scholar remarks not irrelevantly in this connection that, when Lorca visited the USA in 1929, 'the only part of New York he really liked was the negro part, Harlem'.⁷ His revolutionariness was of a visionary kind: the kind which touched the essence of human pathos without visibly associating itself with this or that cause or group. In his poem 'Cicada' written in 1918, he says:

May my blood on the field
Be sweet rosy loam
Where tired labourers
Sink their hoes.⁸

In another poem, 'Cantos Nuevos' (New Songs), included in his first collection, *Libro de Poemas* (1921), he writes:

I thirst for fragrance and laughs,
I thirst for new songs
Free of moons or lilies
And free of withered amours.

A song of tomorrow that will agitate
The tranquil waters
Of the future. And will fill with hope
Its ripples and its slime.

A song reaching the spirit of things,
And the spirit of the winds,
A song finally resting in the joy
Of the eternal heart.⁹

Lorca's sympathy for the 'tired field-labourers', his rejection of romanticism, and his 'seditious' song about 'agitating the tranquil waters of the future' will probably do very little to qualify him as the author of left-wing political manifestoes. Their 'revolutionary' content may, however, be best understood in the light of Stephen Spender's words: 'Poetry which is not written in order to advance any particular set of political opinions may yet be profoundly political.'¹⁰

Lorca's major tragic dramas—*Blood Wedding* (1933), *Yerma* (1934) and *The*

House of Bernarda Alba (1936)—which all take as their subject frustrated womanhood, are also, and perhaps more importantly, powerful metaphors of the triumph of death over life. Seen as such, and within the socio-political context of Spain at the time of their writing, they are certainly political, if only in the Spenderian sense. In retrospect, they also proved to have been prophetic of the final triumph of fascism (that is, death) in Spain. Reluctant as Lorca was to indulge in direct political argument, especially in his art, he can sometimes let slip remarks which point unequivocally to where his sympathies lie. In *The House of Bernarda Alba*, the following conversation takes place between two of the house maids:

Poncia: All we have is our hands and a hole in God's earth.

Servant: And that's the only earth they'll [the land-owning class] ever leave to us—to us who have nothing!¹¹

On the other hand, Bernarda, the mistress of the house, remarks to herself on one occasion that 'the poor are like animals— they seem to be made of different stuff'. And on another occasion, she rebukes Poncia, her servant: 'Work and keep your mouth shut. The duty of all who work for a living.'¹²

However much Lorca may have thought himself above politics, in the feverish period leading up to the Spanish Civil War when it was becoming increasingly necessary for intellectuals to determine clearly which side they stood on, he appears finally to have been politicised *malgré lui*. Ian Gibson considers it indisputable that Lorca took part, in the months before the outbreak of the civil war, in gatherings of a markedly anti-fascist and Republican character.¹³ In an interview given to a Madrid daily newspaper on 1 April 1936, the poet said:

... The day when hunger is eradicated there is going to be the greatest spiritual explosion the world has ever seen. We will never be able to picture the joy that will erupt when the Green Revolution comes. I'm talking like a real Socialist, aren't I?¹⁴

A month later, the May Day issue of a weekly magazine published this message from him:

I send my affectionate greetings to all the workers of Spain, united on this May 1st by a passionate desire for a more just society.¹⁵

Again, in the last interview he gave before his death, it is very interesting to see how he almost inadvertently defines his political position in the course of speaking about his artistic creed:

The idea of art for art's sake is something that would be cruel if it weren't, fortunately, so ridiculous. No decent person believes any longer in all that nonsense about pure art, art for art's sake. At this dramatic point in time, the artist should laugh and cry with the people. We must put down the bunch of lilies and bury ourselves up to the waist in mud to help those who are looking for lilies...¹⁶

Where the complexity of Lorca's art may have baffled the Nationalist forces of reaction, such explicit pronouncements (coupled with his anti-Catholicism) would have defined his political position for them only too sharply. Significantly, the true revolutionary character of his art seems not to have been lost on the Spanish masses who, despite their illiteracy, learnt his songs by heart. An eye-witness of the civil war reports that 'the tunes and rhymes of his simple little songs became war songs of the "Reds"'.¹⁷ The same scholar tries to explain this phenomenon in the following terms:

For a great part of his work is 'popular' in the sense that it touched his people as though with the full charge of their own half-conscious feelings, intensified and transformed through his art. The emotional forces he released became part of the shapeless revolutionary movements of Spain whether he intended or not. Thus it was, I think, inevitable that he was killed by obscure Fascist brutality and that his work became a banner to the Spanish masses.¹⁸

Thus it was also that some thirty years later, Lorca's poetry and, more importantly, his 'martyrdom', became a banner to a generation of Arab poets who saw themselves, as he did, as 'revolutionaries' fighting on the side of the people in a world still under the dominance of various kinds of fascism.

For those Arab poets who knew Lorca's work well enough to grasp the extent of the Arabic influence on both his sensibility and his poetry (such as al-Bayātī, who is conversant with Spanish and has lived in Spain for many years), the poet's expression of his deep reverence for the Arabic civilisation which once flourished in Spain, and particularly in Granada, could only further have endeared him to them, in the same measure as it must have infuriated his enemies in the ultra-catholic, Nationalist camp at the time. In an interview shortly before the outbreak of the civil war, Lorca was asked what he thought of the fall of Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492. His reply was poignantly candid:

It was a disastrous event, even though they say the opposite in the schools. An admirable civilisation, and a poetry, architecture and delicacy unique in the world— all were lost to give way to an impoverished, cowed town, a wasteland populated by the worst bourgeoisie in Spain today.¹⁹

Poets and rebels

The history of much of the Arab world since the end of World War II has been one of unceasing political and social turmoil. The struggle for national independence from European colonialism gave way to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which after four regional wars within a period of forty years remains unsolved. Internally, the post-independence struggle to create a new just, progressive and democratic social order was often thwarted

by opposing social forces, as the dream of democratic government and dignity for the individual systematically fell victim to repressive dictatorial regimes.

The poets under discussion belonged to a generation who spent their childhood in the shadow of a global war only to reach their maturity during an equally unsettling period of national contention and intellectual schism. Such conditions call for choices to be made, and all four poets may be labelled progressive leftists, with varying degrees of direct political involvement. Different as their poetic styles and individual backgrounds are, they all share a concern for the ordinary people, the down-trodden classes, the repressed individual. All hanker for social justice and political freedom, believing in their poetic art as a means of achieving these lofty goals, and all express a sense of mission; a vision of the poet-hero, the man of words become a man of action—to the point of death if necessary. In this connection, Lorca seems to have presented himself to them as the very embodiment of their high ideal. To them, his best and most meaningful poem was not one of words; it was his own death.

It is perhaps understandable that the Iraqi poet, Sayyāb (1926-64), whose persecution for his political beliefs ranged from imprisonment to exile, should identify with Lorca. In his poem, 'García Lorca', through a gamut of imagery which mixes the mundane with the sublime, and the tender with the powerful, he portrays the poet as a positive, unstoppable, all-encompassing force of life moving forward with the inevitability of 'Fate' towards a new world and a new future symbolised by 'Columbus' Sail'.

Surprisingly, the Palestinian, Maḥmūd Darwīsh (born 1942), uses the same technique of mixed imagery in his depiction of Lorca. Thus, the poet who is an 'earthquake' and 'a hurricane' is also 'music' and 'a chanted prayer': the effect is again of a larger-than-life, all-encompassing figure. In imagery which evokes the poetic world of Lorca himself, Darwīsh brings in a favourite theme among modern Arab poets in general, namely that of the 'poet' as a 'doer', or the 'word' becoming 'action': 'The noblest of *swords* is a *song* of your composition.' On the other hand, Darwīsh's personal identification with Lorca, as poet-fighter with poet-fighter, is paralleled by an implicit identification between fascist-ruled Spain and Israeli-usurped Palestine. Though not mentioned by name, we can read 'Palestine' each time Spain is cited or invoked. As in Sayyāb's poem, the final note here is a hopeful, forward-looking one:

The best news from Madrid [Jerusalem?]
Will come tomorrow.

Again, through an accumulation of images partly inspired by Lorca's poetic repertoire, the Egyptian poet, 'Abd al-Ṣabūr (1931-81), builds up a picture of the Spanish bard as the quintessence of all that is positive and beautiful in life. All the more so to augment our sense of horror in the second section of the poem, when all this life is reduced to 'a heap; a wound above the hill'. In the

end, the murdered poet is elevated into a Christ-figure. Thus, his death should be seen by implication to redeem the world; the poem ends with the triumph of love as the poet-Christ begs his heavenly Father to forgive his killers.

Al-Bayātī's (born 1926) 'Elegies of Lorca' is ostensibly the longest and most complex of all four poems, while Bayātī himself is perhaps the one Arab poet who has most assimilated the world of Lorca and repeatedly invoked it in his own poetry for his own purposes. Commenting on the recurrence in his poetry of traditional Lorcaesque imagery, Bayātī has this to say:

The appearance of the Black Guard²⁰ in my poetry coincides with the appearance in reality of the Black Guard in the Arab World. Therefore its appearance in my poetry should not be seen as necessarily being a borrowing from Lorca. But assuming that it was so, then it must be said that it was a necessary borrowing which came at the right time because the conditions which prevailed in Spain from the beginning of the thirties resemble conditions in the Arab World, even though the details may be different.²¹

While this statement is extremely valuable for understanding the Lorcaesque elements in Bayātī's poetry, it is obviously equally relevant to the other poets discussed here.

Another pronouncement by Bayātī will be particularly helpful in appreciating his intentions in 'Elegies of Lorca'. In the introduction to the second volume of his *Diwan* (collected poems, 1979), he writes:

Here I am searching in this enormous crowd [humanity]—which I cannot help but love—for the mytho-historical hero to transform with a motion of the hand this sacred straw and clay into flames of fire, into revolution. Indeed, I search while dreaming that this very enormous crowd will itself become the mytho-historical hero.²²

For Bayātī, Lorca was certainly a manifestation of his yearned-for mytho-historical hero; while a figure of historic reality, his ideals and his death transferred him to the higher plane of myth. Hence Bayātī's association of Lorca in his poem with the Babylonian mythical hero, Enkidu, who figures in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Enkidu is described in the epic as a wild human creature of the steppes, of surpassing strength. He is at harmony with the beasts of the forest, and delivers them from hunters' snares and other hazards. This symbol of life and benign strength is destroyed by death, and his ghost comes back to describe to his disconsolate friend, Gilgamesh, the horror of the underworld.²³ It is in these mournful terms, representing the triumph of death over life, that Bayātī sees the murder of Lorca.

Yet, within the framework of Bayātī's vision heroes do not really die; they pass on the flame of their ideals eternally.²⁴ Thus, the mytho-historical hero, the Enkidu-Lorca figure, comes back to 'the enchanted city' that is Granada and, by extension, the world. It is as though Lorca were Enkidu, resurrected to engage once more in combat with forces of darkness and death. But the

'city's eye-lids were tied with slumber'; the historic moment was not right, so the resurrected hero has to die again.

The poem is clearly influenced (especially in section IV) by Lorca's great elegy, *Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias* (1935), in which the Spanish poet sees in the murder by the bull of his bull-fighter friend a symbol of the triumph of death over life. In its sense of utter grief, summed up by the line: 'And the bull alone exultant!', Lorca's poem is very pessimistic. Into this sombreness, Bayātī introduces a flicker of light. For while his Enkidu-Lorca hero still dies by the horns of the (fascist) bull, the bull itself is by no means 'exultant': 'Pierced in the arena, [it] bellows full-throated.' Yet, the bull is not finally killed; it is perhaps weakened by the heroic thrust, but lives on. Nor can it be killed until what Bayātī refers to above as 'the enormous crowd' and 'the sacred clay and straw', and less flatteringly in the poem as the 'clownish crowd', are transformed into revolutionaries worthy of their saviour-heroes. Hence his angry cry at the end of the poem, in an attempt to shake his audience, 'the enormous crowd', into self-liberating action:

O Parrot of the besotted King! O Mistress of the Sultan! . . .
Gamble with the head of this rebel!

Different as their poetic techniques may be, all four poets examined here seem to share the same vision of Lorca, in which he emerges as the epitome of the ideal of the poet-rebel. Bayātī seems to assign to both poets and rebels the self-same role in the making of history; he describes them as 'the two birds of the storm which foretell revolution and make it'.²⁵ For Arab poets, Lorca, given in the words of his brother, the 'interweaving of his life and work, [his] erasing of the limits between life and fiction',²⁶ represents a kind of Christ-figure able to bring revolutionary redemption beyond historical and geographical limits, equally relevant in Spain, Palestine, Iraq or indeed wherever the cause of Man is at stake. Hence Bayātī's factually, though not poetically, incorrect lines (emphasis added):

Lorca is dying, is dead:
The Fascists executed him at night by the banks of the Euphrates.²⁷

In the idolisation of Lorca and the sense of utter grief at his death which characterise Arab poetry on the subject, there is perhaps an element of vicarious suffering tinged with a sense of guilt. It is as if Lorca had achieved what Arab poets have shrunk from: he had crossed the fearful barrier between poet and rebel, life and death.

Notes

¹ All translations from the Arabic are by the author of this article.

² For an informative skirmish in Arabic into the subject, see Aḥmad 'Abd al-'Azīz, 'The Influence of Federico García Lorca on Contemporary Arabic Literature', *Fuṣūl* 3(4) Cairo, 1983.

- ³ Arturo Barca, *Lorca: the poet and his people*, London: Faber & Faber, 1946, p 11. See also Manuel Duran (ed.) *Lorca. a collection of critical essays*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p 18.
- ⁴ Quoted in Ian Gibson, *The Death of Lorca*, London: W H Allen, 1973, p 40.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Gwynne Edwards, *Lorca: the theatre beneath the sand*, London: Marion Boyars, 1980, p 6.
- ⁷ M Duran, p 33.
- ⁸ Quoted in A Barca, pp 54 and 93.
- ⁹ See J L Gili (ed), *Lorca*, London: Penguin Books, 1971, pp 11-12.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in A Barca, pp 24-5.
- ¹¹ *Three Tragedies of Federico Garcia Lorca*, translated by Graham-Lujan and R L O'Connell, London: Secker & Warburg, 1959, p 161.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp 163 and 193 respectively.
- ¹³ See I Gibson, p 39.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p 40.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 39.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 42.
- ¹⁷ A Barca, p 12.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 11.
- ¹⁹ Quoted in I Gibson, p 43. For a general discussion of the Arabic influence on Lorca's poetry and sensibility, see Edwin Honig, *Garcia Lorca*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1968.
- ²⁰ Bayātī's Black Guard immediately invokes Lorca's *Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard* in which the Guards ride 'black' horses with 'black' horseshoes. To Lorca, the Spanish Civil Guard (founded in 1844 to suppress banditry) was a brutal, anti-life, force of repression, their traditional victims being the gypsies who, by contrast, symbolised to Lorca the vitality and spontaneity of human nature. For more details see I Gibson, p 170; and also A Barca, p 17.
- ²¹ See Ahmed 'Abd al-'Azīz, p 287.
- ²² See *Diwān al-Bayātī* (2) Beirut: Dār al-'Awda, 1979, p 50.
- ²³ See S H Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, London: Penguin Books, 1983, p 50.
- ²⁴ See *Diwan* (2) Introduction, *passim*.
- ²⁵ See *Diwan* (2) p 33.
- ²⁶ See *Three Tragedies of Federico Garcia Lorca*, Introduction by Francisco Garcia Lorca, pp 4-5.
- ²⁷ See Bayātī's poem, 'Death in Granada', *Diwan* (2) p 334.

THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY

Exiles and heartlands: new Caribbean poetry

Stewart Brown

Interiors

Mark McWatt

Mundelstrup, Denmark: Dangaroo Press. 1988. 69pp. n/p

Airy Hall

Fred D'Aguiar

London: Chatto & Windus. 1989. 63pp. £5.95pb

Coolie Odyssey

David Dabydeen

London: Hansib/Mundelstrup, Denmark: Dangaroo. 1988. 49pp. £3.95pb

Mercy Ward

Ian McDonald

Calstock, England: Peterloo Poets. 1988. 72pp. £4.50pb

To Speak Simply: selected poems 1961–1986

A L Hendriks

Sutton, England: Hippopotamus Press. 1988. 117pp. £10.50hb/£6.95pb

Wailing the Dead to Sleep

Lucinda Roy

London: Bogle L'Ouverture, 1988. 75pp. £6.95hb/£4.95pb

Heartease

Lorna Goodison

London: New Beacon Books. 1989. 61pp. £3.95pb

Guyana is a haunting place. The armchair traveller, transported there via the work of the country's major writers (Wilson Harris, Roy Heath, Edgar Mittelholzer) receives a schizophrenic image of, on the one hand, isolation— the

vast 'interior', with its towering rain forest, rivers wider than seas and shimmering, mysterious Amerindians—and on the other hand of a kind of claustrophobia—diverse and bristling communities trapped by history on the lip of an 'alien' continent and betrayed by their politicians into poverty and racial antagonism. Three of the poets featured in this review are 'exiled' Guyanese, and another, Ian McDonald, is 'Guyanese by adoption', having lived in the country for the last thirty-five years; the sense of two worlds contained within the one country, worlds which overlap and give 'context' to each other, is present in all of these books in different ways.

Mark McWatt's childhood was spent travelling around the interior with his father, a government district officer, and that experience permeates the poems in this brilliant début collection. Many of the poems are set in that childhood 'heartland of dreams', but throughout the book the cunning plurality of its title interweaves landscape, the poet's memory of the people and auras of that physical interior, and his sense of personal 'interior' *selves*. In the opening poem of the collection, 'Porkknocker', the prospector might stand as a metaphor for the process of 'possession' by the landscape that many other poems in the collection explore. Obsessed with his quest for gold, or rather with the quest for the quest for gold, at the point of 'discovery' the porkknocker 'erupts', becomes one with the landscape he has spent so long exploring:

The cold basaltic pulse
booms once in a lifetime
and then subsides like a bat's cry
into the depths of earth veins;
the golden net of nerves
with dying hum becomes
again unfeeling ore of the porkknocker.
bauble of a millennium.

The rhythmic, imagistic resonance of that quotation is characteristic of the texture of this side of McWatt's writing. He evokes the eerie atmospheres of his remembered, darkly magical, Guyana with irresistible subtlety. The reader is drawn into a world occupied by such characters as Ignatio, the deranged boat builder, living 'on a granite outcrop, all alone' since his world shattered when his daughter 'turned to stone', and Carmen, the ineffable Muse-like 'River Girl' and those

bent bodies on the stelling
shouldering the foreday like beasts
of burden, while others wait
with lost whistles
and branches of fire and smoke
that ape the sun.

(*'Morawhanna'*)

But it is the 'presence' of the interior itself that possesses the poet—a memory of its light and music, and its cruel energy that filters through those psychic levels to provide some elemental measure against which the 'issues' of his present, domestic, 'civilised' life can be judged:

horrors dwell
within all life and love
—I see them all the time:
between the lines
of your body and mine
(*'Between the Lines'*)

His domestic life takes place elsewhere (McWatt has been a lecturer at the University of the West Indies in Barbados since 1975), but the interiors which his poetry explores with such muscular grace are rooted in that awesome heartland.

Fred D'Aguiar's childhood was also spent in rural Guyana—though he has lived in England for more than a decade now—and his much acclaimed first collection, *Mama Dot* (1985), opened out from his memories of that childhood. His new collection, *Airy Hall* is strikingly similar to the earlier book in terms of structure and areas of concern, but is technically much more innovative and adventurous. Airy Hall is the village in Guyana where D'Aguiar grew up, and where Mama Dot, his iconic grandmother, held court. The first twenty pages of this collection are given over to terse, intense poems that examine aspects of the life of the village and their significance for the poet 'in exile' from

The red sand road, houses well back.
Trees there to collect dust
Whipped by traffic and flung at them,
The log bridge I am forever crossing
For a sound logs make as they shuffle
Underfoot . . .

(*'Airy Hall'*)

That 'forever' extends on into the poet's present, acting—like McWatt's internalised 'nightsongs' of the interior—as a marker on reality against which all his present experience is measured. D'Aguiar's Guyana is more of a social and political world than McWatt's elemental heartland; beyond the 'innocence' of Airy Hall, the hustle for survival in 'this fowl-coop Republic' is bitterly chronicled in such revealingly titled poems as 'The Cow Perseverance', 'Only the President's Eggs are Yellow' and 'El Dorado Update':

Big business has pulled out overnight:
houses left to servants, shops to cockroaches.
You separate twin-ply of toilet rolls,
pinch grammes off every measurement
and spread your goods on the floor

for the morning's trade
in a sheet you can fold quick.
(*'El Dorado Update'*)

D'Aguiar has learnt a lot from Derek Walcott. His presence was apparent in *Mama Dot* and it is here too in the tone of these poems that recall Walcott's angry, but still measured, critiques of Trinidad's squandering of its oil wealth and pandering to the divisive politics of race. But D'Aguiar does with Walcott what Walcott did with all the poets *he* learnt from; he takes what he admires, leaves enough evidence of his borrowing to acknowledge the debt, but turns those borrowings to his own distinctive purposes. The final section of *Airy Hall* is devoted to a long poem, 'The Kitchen Bitch', that demonstrates the extent and originality of D'Aguiar's talent. Broken into a sequence of thirty-two sections, mostly sixteen-line 'sonnets', the poem takes the form of an internal monologue by a man who was betrayed into exile by 'those I trusted' when the political forces he supported were overthrown. Desperate to return to his heartland, he guides a party of tourists (it is never quite clear what their status is) into the mountains and forests of a country that sounds very much like Guyana, suspecting all the while that one of them is 'the man contracted to destroy me'. The poem chronicles the travails of the journey and the narrator's parallel exploration into his own psyche. Gradually he discovers that the enemy he is obsessed with is part of a fantasy he has constructed around the land, the 'interior' he is exploring:

My prison without windows and door;
My enemy stuck in my very pores;
The bars that X-ray me down to my bones;
The light loved without knowing why I love.

Like McWatt's 'Porkknocker', the narrator of 'The Kitchen Bitch' is consumed by the object of his obsession. It is not an easy poem to read- or paraphrase! but there is an insistent fascination about the manner of its telling that repays repeated reading. Indeed, that observation is true of the collection as a whole; both as a critic and a poet, D'Aguiar is an unfashionably 'serious' and thoughtful writer who is, in consequence, always worth the effort of reading.

The 'interior' and mystery of David Dabydeen's Guyana melds into that of the tarnished Indian heartland which his grandmother left to become an indentured labourer in the canefields of El Dorado. Two generations later, the poet honours her memory in the superb title poem of this new collection, written from the perspective of his own exile in England. Dabydeen's first collection, *Slave Song* (1984), won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize and, in my opinion, *Coolie Odyssey* is even more impressive. The poems are grounded in personal experience, but resonate at the level of a symbolic record. Two myths dominate the collection: the fear/fascination of sexual relationships across the race divide, and the idea of 'the folk'. The title poem examines the nostalgia for 'the folk'

in recent British/Irish poetry, an imagined peasantry emerging 'from peat bogs' whose lives may have been hard but are seen now to exemplify rooted, stable values. Dabydeen contrasts that armchair mythologising with the far from rooted experience of a 'folk' population to which his grandmother belonged and which, to a significant extent, shaped him. For Dabydeen's generation of Caribbean double (maybe triple) exiles in Britain, that world is as real, as sharp, as the English cold shoulder;

In a winter of England's scorn
We huddle together memories, hoard them from
The opulence of our masters.

You were always back home, forever
As canfield and whiplash, unchanging
As the tombstones in the old Dutch plot
Which the boys used for wickets playing ball.

The poem, and the rest of the book, create vivid portraits of characters whose lives span these two worlds; for many of them, their fraught relationships with 'the "White Woman" (Miranda/Britannia)' focus and provide a metaphor for all the contradictions of their condition. Old Ma Dabydeen knows enough of life to understand both sides of the relationship. She has known enough broken dreams both to comprehend the idealistic anger of her 'sons'—fighting all their life for a world, a love, free from the taint of history's corruptions— and to understand the carefree white girl's apparent 'shallowness':

how she go understand all that burden and fruit
You bear for we?
And how she go crave your soul and seed
Who always eat plenty
From different pot?

Book learning you got,
But history done dead, hard like teeth and bone
And white people don't want heal their own scar or
hear their own story
And you can't hug them with bruk hand
Or lash sense in them with overseer stick.
(*'Ma Talking Words'*)

Ma Dabydeen might well have ended her days in the kind of hospital 'for the poorest of the poor' that Ian McDonald chronicles—and celebrates— in *Mercy Ward*. It is one of those rare, inspirational books that reaffirm the power of poetry to make us *see* in ways that no other way of saying can achieve. *Mercy Ward* is rooted in that grim social and political reality that exploits Mama Dot and Ma Dabydeen and their sons. Without the financial resources to pay for the kind of medical care that might make their last days more comfortable, the occupants of *Mercy Ward* are revealed in these poems as

having other resources that allow them—in their different ways—to depart their lives with dignity. The book is full of characters and incidents from the 'life' of Mercy Ward: Nurse Guyadeen, 'Fast Finish' Knowlesar, 'Big Bull' Cousins and my favourite, 'old Magru, not known for being difficult', who, when the ward was heaped with flowers for a visit by a 'serious princess from the British Isles',

Amidst the healthy dignitaries, all those lovely blooms,
Gave forth the loudest fart you ever heard.
(*'Royal Visit'*)

Considering the pervading presence of death in *Mercy Ward*, there is a surprising amount of humour in the collection. This is not because McDonald romanticises his subject, but it rather reflects his close observation of the strategies that the patients and the staff employ in coming to terms with their situations. The strain on the staff is as much an issue in the book as the ordeals of the patients. McDonald understands how, for individuals like Betty Kumar, retiring after fifty years of emptying

slop pails in the Ward:
Morning, midday, nine o'clock at night
Cleaned out the urine, spit, and vomit;
Swilling disinfectant, scraped out shit,
Running water sluiced them clean, clean, clean
(*'Betty Kumar'*)

the ritual 'humiliations' of the terminal-illness ward have become fundamentals of her identity. They are her *life*. McDonald finds dignity in all sorts of situations but when the people of McWatt's heartland meet the innate indignity of an impoverished state's public health provision, then the result is both tragic and disruptive of the ward's caring ambience,

I suppose you'd say with truth
No one here looks all that 'right'.
But they settle themselves down.
He was all wrong from start to finish;
He squatted in his bed half the time
Paddling a strange bateau.

All his life he knew forests,
Forests and the great rivers.
Why bring him in town to die?
His soul is damned that way.
Tribal over-arching heaven
Replaced by rag of sky.
(*'Amerindian'*)

In different ways, many of the poems in *Mercy Ward* explore the tensions between inner lives and 'exterior' experience, and although McDonald resists

the idea of Mercy Ward (based, more or less, on the Mercy Hospital in Georgetown) serving as a metaphor for the social and political state in which it operates, the collection certainly offers a unique insight into the life of contemporary Guyana.

The remaining three books under review are by Jamaican poets, two of them long-term 'exiles' overseas. A L Hendriks has been based in the UK for many years, and the poems in this substantial selection reflect his travels and the particular angle on events that experience affords him. He writes with great affection for, and insight into, the Caribbean; poems like 'Rural Literacy Class', 'The fringe of the sea' and 'Requiem for a Caribbean Fisherman' are by now classics of West Indian poetry, but the poems that relate to his experience in England seem to me to be the most original and accomplished. Early pieces like 'Their Mouths But Not Their Hearts' caught with great precision the mannered distrust of the mealy-mouthed English middle classes for the Caribbean emigrants, the black 'strangers', who moved in their circles:

They treat me civilly, are indeed polite,
always choose quickly to discuss
Sunshine, bananas, rum, calypsos
And inevitably cricket,
(*'Once saw your cousin keeping wicket.'*)
But wonder if their women dream at night
About the things they've heard about us.

Later poems do not focus on the issues of race that characterise much recent poetry by peoples of West Indian origin in Britain, but Hendriks' sense of difference, of outsidersness, gives him a distinctive view of English life and values:

How quickly after leaving school
they lose that dreaminess
Which can dismay teachers
knowing the attention is not on
The subject: that visionary non-look
which floats above the wilderness
of textbooks, blackboards, test-papers . . .

How quickly . . .
... they become bland
Efficient operators of the jobs
for which their formal education
Made them eligible (not
fitted them for, you will understand),
And experts on share indexes,
for they are a financial generation . . .
(*'The non-look and the look'*)

Hendriks' sense of himself as an—albeit self-selected—exile informs other

poems that address fundamentals of the human condition; a piece like 'The Migrant' is vivid with both lived and anticipated experience, with the knowledge that (like the patients in McDonald's *Mercy Ward*) we are all destined to be 'Embarking Passengers' sooner or later:

We watch her go through
The gate for *Embarking passengers Only*
Fearful and unutterably lonely,
Finger our own documents,
Shuffle forward in the queue.

Hendriks has always been an accomplished writer; he uses versions of both English and Jamaican creole with great fluency, and has an admirable sense of rhythm patterns and forms appropriate to both languages. He can both be a very formal poet and make full use of the freedom afforded by writing in less conventional shapes. If he has weaknesses, they are related to a 'colonial's' delight in a rather ornate English and an exile's tendency to sentimentalise his homeland, but these are very occasional, and certainly forgivable, faults. He has been 'unlucky' (if you discount the literary establishment's innate racism) that his distinctive voice has never quite been 'in fashion'; his books have been published by good but mostly 'small' presses and have consequently never received the critical attention they deserve. One hopes that with the appearance of such a major collection as *To Speak Simply*, Hendrik's stature as a poet of real achievement will be more widely acknowledged.

Lucinda Roy has also spent much of her life away from Jamaica. She grew up in the UK and now teaches at a US university, and her poetry is clearly influenced by recent black/feminist verse in the USA. (The collection comes with a rather fey introduction by Nikki Giovanni.) But, as the daughter of the legendary Jamaican-Maroon artist and writer, Namba Roy, she could hardly fail to be in tune with the essence and energy of Caribbean culture. Her fine poem, 'Carousel', written in memory of her father, demonstrates both the intellectual steel of her US milieu—each word earns its keep, the images are stark and original—and the cultural soul of her work; its attachments to the myths and values of an Africa her father's work made manifest:

I have the things you made
and she has made us see you in them.
I have the ivory statues and the pictures
telling stories of African ancestors,
a birth, flights into Egypt. In your work
I find the stillness of your eyes and mouth,
the stillness which is always at the centre
Of the spinning ball we hurl high and long.

Elsewhere her poems chronicle her own travels through the realities of contemporary Africa, and, more fruitfully, chart an inward journey towards the discovery and acceptance of an identity that history, memory and personal

destiny have conspired to complicate. The British-born daughter of Jamaican parents whose own grandparents were quite probably African slaves, Lucinda Roy's 'Legacy for a Son', born a citizen of the USA, is a worldly wise and poignantly stated plea for human values:

So when you love your country,
Love it with a kind of reticence.
Don't hedge your stars into a corner
of midnight. Don't parade your stripes
until you know how red red is
on the lid of a soldier's coffin.
Remember that however high the flag is raised
it is just that a flag, a pole, some string,
and they are often wrong who say it flies.

Such wit and irony is typical of the best poems in *Wailing the Dead to Sleep*, a first collection that announces the presence of a genuine poetic talent.

By contrast with Lucinda Roy's cool introspections, the poems in Lorna Goodison's third collection, *Heartease* are much more self-consciously public utterances. She has built a reputation as a representative voice of her times in Jamaica, speaking to the condition of women in particular. Her work recalls the magic realism of Dennis Scott and 'the high poet / of Machu Picchu', Pablo Neruda, but also—and less positively—the overly lyrical folksiness of US singer-songwriters such as Joni Mitchell. Lorna Goodison is renowned for her public readings, and one can see how the admirable sentiments that underpin many of these poems would be well received in such circumstances. Some of them, however, read as rather limp and self-indulgent on the page:

This hymn
is for the must-be-blessed
the victims of the world
who know salt best
the world tribe
of the dispossessed
outside the halls of plenty
looking in
this is a benediction
this is a hymn
(*'This is a Hymn'*)

These are 'tell me' not 'show me' poems. Lorna Goodison is much more interesting when she is writing from her own direct experience. The 'Heartease' of the title is a dream of a place, a community and a state of being that will nurture and fulfil the poet. The book takes the form of a quest for an *out* of a Jamaica that may be beautiful but can also be brutal.

Dem stick wi up
dem jook wi down
and when dem no find

what dem come fi find
them blood we and say
'walk wid more next time'.
(*'Heartease I'*)

The poem suggests that a spiritual fulfilment is possible if the poet—and, I suppose, by implication the society—trusts *herself and her potential* to make more of life than seems to be indicated by the cards Fate has dealt her:

Truth say,
Heartease distance
cannot hold in a measure
it say
travel light
you are the treasure.
It say
you can read map
even if you born
a Jubilee
and grow with your granny
and eat crackers for your tea.

Heartease charts a personal/public working-through of a dilemma familiar enough in Caribbean literature; the desire to stay close to roots and the source of inspiration, arguing with a desire to find a place that will make the business of writing more comfortable and rewarding. The choice is between Exile and Heartland. Yet, there is too much 'pretty' writing, too much self-conscious posturing

For my mission this last life is certainly this
to be the sojourner poet carolling for peace
calling lost souls to the way of *Heartease*.

to convince this reader, at least, of the pain—and thus the licence—the poet proclaims.

Competing rituals: José María Arguedas and the voice of native Andean culture

William Rowe

Yawar Fiesta

José María Arguedas

Translated from the Spanish by Frances Horning Barracough
London: Quartet. 1989. 200pp. £5.95pb

First published in English in 1985 and issued now in paperback, *Yawar Fiesta* (Bloody Fiesta) appears to have received only one substantial review to date in the UK. That the Peruvian, José María Arguedas should be a virtually unknown writer in English is partly a result of the difficulties of translation. It is also a reflection of the minor position allocated to him, until recently, by mainstream Latin American criticism. If the first name most readers will associate with Peruvian literature is Mario Vargas Llosa, it is worth noting that the good many essays he has written on Arguedas have argued for preserving his relatively peripheral status.

In the last ten years, however, a number of factors have begun to bring about a radical change. In the first place, there is the extraordinarily wide readership that Arguedas's novels have gained among the social and cultural majority of non-middle-class Peruvians, to the extent that his name has become the single most powerful symbol of an alternative culture. Then there is the interpretative power of Arguedas's work *vis-à-vis* the divisions and complexities of Latin American culture, making him, along with Gilberto Freyre or Angel Rama, a key figure for any modern cultural history. At the same time, a number of crucial critical studies, particularly those by Angel Rama,¹ have gone some way towards recognising Arguedas's genius and his place as a major twentieth-century author. Like César Vallejo, and in the early colonial period, Guaman Poma, and Garcilaso the Inca, Arguedas brings the reader up against the multiplicity of voices and discourses that characterises Peruvian culture and that precedes any coherence, let alone style.

Born in highland Peru in 1911, and living inside native Andean culture for several years of his childhood, Arguedas came to regard Quechua as his mother tongue, but saw Spanish as the necessary vehicle for a bilingual and bicultural literature. His work comprises a series of novels and stories as well as a substantial body of anthropological studies. He has also produced a short book of poems composed in Quechua; little explored, they are among his most important works. He committed suicide in 1969, an act which figures textually in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (The Fox from Above and the Fox from Below, 1971), his most complex and visionary novel. This final work explores the impact of late twentieth-century modernisation on ancient cultural traditions, causing both their dispersal and their reinvigoration in new contexts, as the Andean population emigrates massively into the cities, radically altering the cultural landscape. Apart from *Yawar Fiesta*, two other books of his are available in English: the novel, *The Deep Rivers* (1978; originally published as *Los ríos profundos* (1958))² and *The Singing Mountaineers* (1957; originally published as *Canto kechwa* (1938) and *Canciones y cuentos del pueblo quechua* (1949)),³ a collection of Quechua songs and folktales with an introductory essay.

First published in Lima in 1941, *Yawar Fiesta* was written at a key moment in Arguedas's career. The experience of several months of prison in Lima, for

having participated in an anti-fascist demonstration, brought him into close contact with the political organisers of the two main left-wing parties, and produced in him the conviction that the language of these parties was bankrupt: a later novel, *El Sexto* (the name of the prison) (1961), shows their programmes as being based on hatred and sectarianism, and that they have no sense of love as the necessary basis for sociality and have lost all contact with the creative capacities of the mass of people. Arguedas left Lima and went to live in a small town south of Cusco, immersing himself in native rituals, festivals and music. The dominant view of native culture at the time was racist: Indians were backward and inferior. However, a growing *Indigenista* (indigenist) movement in literature and art had begun to give to the Indian a voice and an iconographic legitimacy. Given, though, that the voice and the imagery were articulated from a non-Andean communicative system, Arguedas was never in this sense an *Indigenista*, since his narratives presuppose an Andean cultural matrix. *Yawar Fiesta* also breaks with the contemporary left-wing political uses of the Indians, which made them into mouthpieces without acknowledging that they had their own political traditions. In an earlier version of the novel, Arguedas interpreted the Indian bullfight, referred to in the title, as a degrading spectacle which the ruling class use to maintain domination. In the novel itself, a critical connection is made between this simplifying and instrumentalist view of culture on the part of the ruling class, and the politics of the Communist Party. The novel also distances itself from the vapid populism of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) party, which sought to make the 'Indian' into a symbol of the nation. On the contrary, the territory and its cultures are shown to be deeply divided, and cohesion impossible without fundamental change. The terms and possibilities of such change are still being debated at present, and the exploratory power of Arguedas's work places it at the core of that debate.

Arguedas's novel displays an intricate series of social and ethnic differences, pertaining to class and to ethnicity, which work together or against each other according to the moment. Meanings are divided, without possibility of unity, as Indians, *mestizos* and state authorities struggle for hegemonic control over the bullfight. Two rituals compete, with their history and their social consequences: the Indian bullfight where the bull is a god confronted by the whole community, and the Spanish bullfight with a professional *torero* and a public of spectators. Bulls, of course, are not native to the Andes, but have been incorporated into native myth. In the struggle for symbolic capital, the Indians have not only taken over the symbols of the colonisers, but their version of National Independence Day imposes itself, transculturally, on the *mestizos*. At issue are the resources for resistance and rebellion, as opposed to passivity, a problem on which Arguedas meditated throughout his life. The conclusion of *Yawar Fiesta* is ambiguous: by killing the bull the Indians have killed a god, but have they simply demonstrated their strength within the terms of a stabilisation of

resistance and oppression reached in colonial times, or have they shown their capacity to destroy the symbols which hold them back from a more modern understanding of their situation? The novel is set in the 1930s, a period when the highlands were increasingly penetrated by road transport, with all its modernising consequences. One of the Indians' achievements is the building of a road through very difficult terrain at incredible speed, suggesting the historical possibility of an alternative modernisation, under local control. Nevertheless, the festival and its blood-spilling have an undeniably sacrificial dimension, a powerful but destructive focus of social cohesion.

The difficulties of translating this novel into English are many, and it should first be stressed that the help which Frances Horning Barraclough has given to the reader is exemplary: a preliminary note by Arguedas is included, as well as two essays by him, one on the reasons for his literary decisions and the other an ethnographic study of the region the novel is set in. There is also a translator's note, with a useful list of *dramatis personae*, setting out the complex terminology of social rank and ethnic difference, and an excellent glossary of Quechua and Spanish terms. The translation gives an adequate sense of the text as a whole and is excellent when handling Arguedas's mixing of Quechua and Spanish. Its weakness is when handling the epic mode which Arguedas chose for presenting the struggles of the Indian community. For instance, epic temporality, held in collective memory, is diluted into a thinner voice: 'Up on the punas and along the roads, rain or shine, at dawn or at dusk, the *wakawak'ras* kept announcing the bullfight'; the Spanish reads 'En la puna y en todos los caminos, con sol o con lluvia, al amanecer y anocheciendo, los *wakawak'ras* presentían el pukllay.' The resort to archaic diction does not work well either: 'In the olden times, all of the mountain and fields on the puna belonged to the *comuneros*. In those days there were not many cattle in Lucanas: the *mistis* did not covet the grazing land.' On the other hand, the use of mid-twentieth-century slang for the speech of the *mistis* ('whites', dominant class) makes them too modern and sophisticated, as when they answer each other with the phrase 'Yeah, man'. The problem lies in translating the historical and cultural density of Arguedas's text, which is itself the product of an intense struggle with the language. When the subject is purely the landscape of the high Andes, the English can be very good:

On the high puna, beneath a cloudy sky, in the great silence, whenever the rainstorm begins and black clouds strike fear and make the heart tremble, or when the white gulls fly singing in the high, limpid sky and the traveller's eyes gaze into the distance, pensive in the vastness of the silence, at any time at all those stone huts with their blue smoke, with the barking of their little dogs, with the crowing of their roosters, are a consolation to those who walk the wild puna.

In the best discussion of *Yawar Fiesta* to date, the Peruvian critic, Antonio Cornejo Polar, contrasts it with the fashionable idea of novels whose only reality is in the language they create,⁴ an idea which had considerable influence

on the 'Boom' of the Latin American novel in the 1960s and 1970s. For Cornejo, what distinguishes Arguedas's novel is its realism, that is, its referentiality. But this Lukacsian privileging of realism is inappropriate. Arguedas writes from a poetics of orality. In an oral universe, the fact that all language actions are referential to some degree is particularly apparent: the word is always an event. Arguedas himself said at a writers' conference in 1965:

I don't accept the term 'verbal reality' . . . It doesn't exist! The word is the name of things or of thoughts or reflections that come from things; 'verbal reality' is 'reality reality'.⁵

So semantic analysis is the analysis of reality, and vice versa: 'the voice of the *wakawak'ra* sounds deep and slow, like the voice of a man, like the voice of the high puna with its cold wind whistling through the mountain passes, over the lakes.' *Yawar Fiesta*, to give it its due cultural importance, is an outstanding exemplification of two key critiques of Western ethnocentrism: Claude Levi-Strauss's idea that 'savage thought' is as valid as the scientific world view,⁶ and V N Vološinov/Mikhail Bakhtin's exposition of the endless instability of language.⁷ Arguedas's lucid, beautiful and complex novels deserve to be better known.

¹ A Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1982.

² J M Arguedas, *The Deep Rivers*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978.

³ J M Arguedas, *The Singing Mountaineers*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957.

⁴ A Cornejo Polar, *Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas*, Buenos Aires: Losada, 1973.

⁵ *Primer Encuentro de Narradores Peruanos*, Lima: Casa de la Cultura, 1969.

⁶ C Levi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, Paris: Plon, 1962.

⁷ V N Vološinov, *Murxism and the Philosophy of Language*, London: Seminar Press, 1973.

LITERARY REVIEWS

Happy endings

Love in the Time of Cholera

Gabriel Garcia Márquez

Translated from the Spanish by Edith Grossman

London: Jonathan Cape. 1988. 352pp. £12.95hb

Eva Luna

Isabel Allende

Translated from the Spanish by Margaret Sayers Peden

London: Hamish Hamilton. 1989. 272pp. £11.95hb

Gabriel Garcia Márquez's latest novel in English translation opens with a suicide Jeremiah de Saint Amour could not bear the idea of ageing; he suffered from 'gerontophobia' and had sworn 'I will never grow old'. This hypnotic novel explores the dilemmas of ageing through a plot of unrequited love; a man, Florentino Ariza, waiting fifty-one years, nine months and four days for his rival to die in order to reaffirm his love for his sweetheart, Fermina Daza. The novelty of this theme is striking, almost implausible. Florentino Ariza's head is filled with the illusions read of in sentimental poems. His patience is rewarded at the end when he finally beds his aged beloved in a riverboat. The smell of human fermentation is a small matter compared to his dream-come-true. The title of the novel yokes cholera and unrequited love as diseases with similar symptoms; it alludes to the rival who, as a doctor, fights epidemics of cholera, and to the final riverboat scene where a flag warns that there are cholera victims on board when in fact two pensioners are enjoying their delayed honeymoon. The last ironic comment of the novel mocks all popular songs; aged seventy-six and seventy-two, the couple promise to love each other 'forever'.

Does García Márquez really believe in happy endings? Clearly not. As crucial in this long novel as the delayed love-scene is how the narrator—a populist 'we'—establishes the background. The novel is probably set in Barranquilla, once a thriving port in the putrefying swamps of the Magdalena river mouth. The heat, the floods, the insects and especially the smells continually pester the main characters. The wind 'spent the night circling like hungry wolves looking for a crack where they could slip in'. Suggestive details evoke the changing times: the arrival of the telephone (and anonymous betrayals of lovers), telegraph, typewriters, civil wars, trips to Europe. The first outdoor cinema is vividly described: 'all one could hear was the projector murmuring like rain'. Aeroplanes are dismissed as 'flying coffins'. The social setting is equally realistic: we are dealing with the privileged and well-off in a provincial backwater. These people are indifferent to politics, and do not comment on corpses littering banana fields with bullet holes in the neck. But what is enriching about this counterpointing of the characters with the dawning of the twentieth century is that the politicised García Márquez, friend of Fidel Castro, refuses to judge his characters, or condemn them to the limbo of non-lives.

He is far more subtle, and generous. The way he situates his protagonist is exemplified

when the patient Florentino Ariza finally climbs into a riverboat bed with his beloved and receives a telegram saying that his god-daughter has killed herself. He seduced América Vicuña as a child, and they became lovers. He then broke off the relationship without ever realising how much in love with him, despite his age, the school-girl was. She had found his secret love letters to Fermina Daza, and killed herself. He reacts by not allowing himself 'the anguish of that memory'. He is strangely heartless, and deserves the transient happiness he finds too late with Fermina. If he forgets the girl's suicide, we do not.

García Márquez's main male characters do not like facing up to reality. When Doctor Urbino returned from distant Europe 'he could no longer endure the unmerciful reality that came pouring in through the windows'. They are specialists in 'avoiding reality' by living in illusions. Ariza's mental escapes come prefabricated from pulp fiction; the men are expert in the 'ethical management of forgetfulness'. The plague of forgetfulness was one of the main moral faults García Márquez attributed to the Macondonians. However, living in illusion does not apply to the women. This novel becomes a tribute to liberated widows. One of them rejoices that her husband is dead because 'I know for certain where he is when he is not at home'. Only after her husband's death does Fermina dare become herself, without the numbing chores of housework, an entire bed to herself. She had rejected Florentino Ariza because she realised that he was in love with love. After defying her father with a furtive letter affair, she suddenly saw Ariza as 'the shadow of someone she had never met'. Fermina is a typical Marquesian woman 'whose feet were planted firmly on the ground'. She smells her husband's clothes to see whom he has been with. It is the men who are mocked, the 'perfect husbands' obsessed with honour, who kill their wives if they have been unfaithful. Women are there for sex, their 'hellish circles' drawing men to them, where copulation is like an injection.

The novel is also a manual on love and women. Florentino is able to wait his fifty years because he compensates by philandering so secretly that he is reputed to be gay. He keeps notebooks simply called 'Women' and details his 622 long-term affairs. There are examples of every variety of heterosexual encounter, from paid, loveless love in brothels to domestic love, secret love and the aftermath of love. There is solitary love, and mother love. But especially there is couple love. Without earthly passions, no character feels life is worth living. 'Nothing one does in bed is immoral if it helps perpetuate love', so Sara Noriega likes to suck pacifiers during her orgasm.

Finally, what makes this novel so vital is the way it is written. It cannot be reduced to its themes, or moral schema. One of its distinctive features is how long passages of reported action culminate in surprisingly pithy comments or dialogues. The book is packed with aphorisms. Then, there are the images—black coffee is 'as thick as crude oil'—and there is the humour. Fermina agrees to marry the doctor only if she does not have to eat eggplant; she tells a dream where she walked about naked and is reprimanded by the repressive Doña Blanca: 'a decent woman cannot have that kind of dream'. García Márquez displays an extraordinary ability to make lists of objects left behind by men in a brothel; lists of what doctors did in the old hospital to ward off germs; lists of exotic fruit in a market. The lists pack the variety and richness of the world into the fiction.

Another feature of García Márquez's style is how he focuses on material qualities. People are firstly physical objects detected through the senses. We rarely enter the mind

or psychology of his characters; only see their actions, as if through a camera lens. It makes them seem more alive, and mysterious. They all have sudden revelations, or insights. Nothing is thought out or analysed.

The most moving feature of this novel is how García Márquez plays with the passing of time. The novel opens with a suicide, then the accidental death of Dr Urbino retrieving a lost parrot. It then dips back into the past of the long marriage between the doctor and Fermina, following her courtship with Ariza, and then returns to the present, and finishes with the riverboat journey. The pleasures and tortures of memory flow from this poignant passing of time. Ariza hears his old flame's voice 'whose hushed tones he was not to forget for the rest of his life'. The shift to a future is sudden and moving. A photo taken in a market of Fermina and her cousin leaps forward to be found one-hundred years later. This technique is almost García Márquez's theme song. The novel is an elegy to a lifestyle that is over; nostalgia is the dominant mood.

The exceptionally popular fiction of Isabel Allende has often been dismissed as derivative, a parody of García Márquez. Her third novel to appear in English translation,* the well-translated *Eva Luna*, evokes a similar tropical exuberance, and sometimes incorporates similar verbal tics, like the 'many years later', the stress on sudden revelation, on pungent smells. Isabel Allende endorses the view that Latin America holds together Stone Age tribes with futuristic cities in an unpredictable way: 'All ages of history co-exist in this immoderate geography.' Like García Márquez, she claims that all she writes is true. As journalists, both disclaim invention. In *Eva Luna* the secluded village of German immigrants who specialise in cuckoo clocks is not a magical realist fantasy, but a real place in Venezuela. Allende moves out of García Márquez's shadow because her novels are not saturated with nostalgia and are more populist, addressing contemporary issues.

The novel follows two parallel lives, those of the rebellious orphan, Eva, and the German-born, film-making immigrant, Rolf, who finally become happy lovers. This plot towards happiness unfolds in a picaresque way, with Eva climbing up the social ladder through her guts and wits, working as a servant and finally becoming a soap opera writer. Combined with this woman's discovery of a writer's vocation is a description of oral storytelling as essentially feminine, handed down like Scheherazade's tales from *The Arabian Nights*—from mother to daughter. Allende defends the imagination against an often foul reality. Eva claims that actual reality is imprecise and gelatinous, while what she invents is more durable and real. Her fiction is fun because she does not care about being *cursi* (sentimental and vulgar). Her fiction is close to romantic pulp novels. 'When I write, I describe life as I would like it to be.' A backward girl dies alone in a hospital. Eva refuses to accept this and answers: 'All right, she died, but not the way you say. Let's find a happy ending for her. It was a Sunday . . .' This is not avoiding reality, as so many of García Márquez's male characters do, but realising that fantasy and imagination are as vital in facing up to life as common sense and realism.

Allende is more overtly contemporary and political than García Márquez. *Eva Luna* is packed with larger-than-life characters: there are mean, upper-class spinsters, street urchins turned into macho guerrillas, corrupt politicians, a tough army officer, a hare-lipped Turkish trader and, the most vivid of all, a beautiful transvestite. The guerrilla action that closes the novel reads almost like journalism. Isabel Allende caters to a

* The English translation of Isabel Allende's *Of Love and Shadows* (1987) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10(1) January 1988, pp 309-12.

desire for familiarity with Latin America, and holds our attention with the exaggerated details that create this vibrant, chaotic world. But it is never facile; Eva discovers that her mute Turkish mistress has killed herself; Eva is arrested as the most likely culprit, becomes the dead woman's husband's lover, later digs up a jewellery box that allows a transvestite friend to have an operation, and in the middle of a guerrilla action is relieved that her period, stopped since the suicide, has at last arrived. The novel asserts that the escapist soap operas—the *folletines*—get closest to reality: 'He strode forward, and kissed me exactly as it happens in romantic novels, exactly as I had been wanting him to do for a century, and exactly as I had been describing moments before in a scene between the protagonists of my *Bolero*.'

JASON WILSON

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Protean sophistication

The Buenos Aires Affair

Manuel Puig

Translated from the Spanish by Suzanne Jill Levine

London: Faber & Faber, 1989. 219pp. £4.99pb

Blood of Required Love

Manuel Puig

Translated from the Spanish by Jan I. Grayson

London: Faber & Faber, 1989. 202pp. £4.99pb

As early as the beginning of the 1970s, with only two novels to his name, Manuel Puig had come to be regarded as one of the major exponents of the Latin American *novela del lenguaje* ('language novel'), that is, one of the writers concerned increasingly with narrative and stylistic experimentation. In an area of the novel known for its experimental audacity, Puig has never yet used the same overall narrative technique twice, and in each work he has demonstrated a continual willingness and capacity to develop. The success of the 1985 cinema version of his *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1979) seems to have boosted interest considerably in Puig's work in the English-speaking world and, happily, almost all his novels are now available in translation.*

The Buenos Aires Affair is, in a broad sense, a kind of thriller, whose plot is set in motion by the abduction of the female protagonist, Gladys Hebe D'Onofrio, an Argentine sculptor, a woman frustrated both professionally and emotionally, and whose intimate history is told to us after the event of the kidnapping. She is a self-considered failure from an unhappy, middle-class background, has had a history of loveless sexual relationships, and has been the victim of some horrendous misfortunes, notably a sexual assault in Washington at the age of twenty-seven, when she was beaten by her assailant, and lost an eye. After a nervous breakdown she returns to Argentina to live with her

* The English translations of Manuel Puig's *Heartbreak Tango: a serial* (1987) and *Pubis Angelical* (1987) were reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10(2) April 1988, pp 985-87.

uncaring mother. Through her sculpture, Gladys becomes intimately acquainted with a leading art critic, Leo Druscovich, whose past is told to us in the same factual, potted biographical format as that of Gladys (an incongruously cold and detached style, given the intimacy of the details).

Leo, too, is a character tormented by his own sexuality. Since childhood he has fostered feelings of guilt and shame arising from his intensely overactive sexuality, his longing for a mother-figure he never had, and his inability to form relationships based on affection. He is forced to resort to one-night stands (often with prostitutes) because he can derive satisfaction only from inflicting pain, and feels only revulsion when he receives an affectionate response to his seductions.

For reasons too complicated to describe in a brief outline, it is Leo who has abducted Gladys. At one point she thinks he is going to kill her but, instead, a sexual encounter takes place. Leo is killed shortly afterwards in a car accident, driving too fast when he mistakenly believes he is being pursued by the police on a murder charge. Gladys, in an extreme state of depression, is about to commit suicide when she is distracted by the friendly attention of a young woman and her baby, who live next door. Gladys recovers a sense of calm, and the novel ends with this peculiarly satisfactory anti-climax.

This is a remarkable novel. The details of the plot in synopsis will seem somewhat convoluted, and many other details in the narrative (a political torture session in Perón's Argentina, the sex attack on Gladys, and the violent death of a homosexual at the hands of Leo) would appear grotesque and gratuitous out of the novel's context. In fact, this ostensible thriller (*not* a detective story as it has occasionally been described, for, among other good reasons, there is no clear resolution, and no detective) is an intriguing exploration of repression, sexuality and desire. Leo and Gladys represent two facets of a darkly symbiotic human sexuality (though their characteristics often mesh and overlap) in their roles of oppressor-oppressed and sadist-masochist. Each character is shown to be both aggressor and victim, products of imposed sexual roles in a rigidly-conventionalised heterosexual culture. They are also victims of their own unhappy family backgrounds and childhoods, and even of their professional aspirations which, to an extent, constitute an attempt to defuse or re-channel their extreme sexual longings. It should be said that the characters' complexes are indeed extreme, but their emotional predicament as unhappy and tortured individuals unable to find emotional stability—authenticity, even—is credible and moving.

As with all of Puig's work, the reader is required to participate in piecing the story together from a variety of discourses, and the author uses a wide variety of techniques with typical dexterity. Each chapter is introduced by an extract of dialogue from an old film which sheds light (indirectly) on the content. This reflects Puig's well-known pre-occupation with mass-culture cinema as a means of providing insights into ordinary lives. The first chapter in its entirety is a good example of Puig's use of cinematic techniques in narrative description. The novel also reproduces dreams, the characters' stream of consciousness, and various 'non-literary' types of writing, such as a telephone conversation as transcribed from shorthand, a post-mortem medical report, a parodic use of footnotes in the description of an orgasm, and collages of news headlines.

Blood of Required Love shows Puig yet again in search of new ways of expressing his complex vision of reality and human relationships. This highly unusual novel is based on a real person, a builder whom Puig came to know whilst living in Brazil in the early 1980s. Fascinated by the man's idiosyncratic rural speech, and the story he had to tell

of his life, Puig recorded him extensively on tape. In its bare essentials, the story, though intriguing, is straightforward enough. The protagonist, Josemar, recounts the days of his youth in his native town of Cocotá (in the province of Rio de Janeiro), when he seduced a young girl, Maria da Gloria, who later became deranged as a result of his deserting her by moving on to another town and to other sexual adventures.

It is Puig's treatment of his subject, with his technical artistry, and his insight into human nature, that takes this account far beyond the limitations of a straightforward transcription of the original oral accounts. Puig has himself explained how the various tellings began to yield a variety of crucial inconsistencies and contradictions, revealing that the subject had become caught up in a massive fabrication, or reworking, of his own past. The result of Puig's treatment is a fascinating exploration of the distortions of memory and the human capacity for self-deception. Josemar is at first convincing and credible, with an apparently meticulous concern for accuracy regarding time and place. Such details are later revealed to be incorrect as he tells the same story over again. Josemar is an embellisher, even an inventor, of a new, remembered past with which he attempts to obliterate the disillusionments of his 'true' history. His sexual prowess, his fame and triumph as a local football hero, his physical courage, his female conquests, are all shown to be exaggerated and distorted versions of a bleaker reality.

Blood of Requited Love suggests that Puig is going from strength to strength in developing his complex novelistic vision. Sadly, what he gains in profundity, he loses in accessibility: the novel is hard work indeed, and certainly requires an attentive second reading before it really makes much sense. A narrative trick sustained throughout has Josemar inventing in his head a series of interlocutory voices, those of important people from his past. This appears to be a self-regulating device which nevertheless allows him to elaborate on his own self-justifications. And, most curiously and puzzlingly, he responds to these voices by referring to himself in the first person, thus lending the narrative a strange (and specious) sense of objectivity. At times, I'm afraid it also left me with a sense of boredom. It is not a novel to be recommended to anyone not familiar with the characteristic complexity of contemporary Latin American fiction, or in particular the protean sophistication of Puig's literary talent.

FRANK McQUADE

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The enigma of Naipaul

A Turn in the South

V S Naipaul

London: Viking, 1989, 307pp, £14.95hb

'The Enigma of Naipaul' is the title of a book waiting to be written. Its central theme would be the unexpected emergence of a more compassionate, less anxiety-ridden V S Naipaul, first spotted in 'The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro' (1984), his essay on the Ivory Coast, and extended in *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), his novel on England.* A

* *The Enigma of Arrival* was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 9(4) October 1987, pp 1376-78.

Turn in the South continues in this welcome vein, and at the same time provides a clue to the unfortunate pronouncements contained in some of the earlier books:

I always knew how important it was not to fall into nonentity. In 1961, when I was travelling in the Caribbean for my first travel book, I remember my shock, my feeling of taint and spiritual annihilation, when I saw some of the Indians of Martinique, and began to understand that they had been swamped by Martinique . . . And eight years or so later, in Belize in Central America, a similar feeling of the void broke through my other preoccupations when I saw the small, lost, half-Indian community of that wretched British colony, coastal timberland poached from what had been the Spanish Empire, peopled with slaves and servants, and then more or less abandoned: New World debris.

It has taken all of thirty years— and half as many books—for Naipaul to come to terms with the roots of his own anxiety. And it is this understanding which has enabled him to look with compassion upon what were previously only half-formed societies always on the point of degenerating into nihilism.

To be swamped by Martinique was to be swamped by Africa—or the blacks. The tension in Naipaul's work has always devolved on this business of race, beginning with his own special position as a Caribbean of Indian descent and already apparent in his first travel book, *The Middle Passage* (1962): 'When people speak of the race problem in Trinidad they do not mean the Negro-white problem. They mean the Negro-Indian rivalry.' It was in this book that he made reference to Indians and blacks pleading 'like monkeys' for evolution.

'My thoughts . . . were about the race issue,' Naipaul tells us at the beginning of his new book; and adds: 'I didn't know then that the issue would quickly work itself out during the journey, and that my subject would become that other South— of order and faith, and music and melancholy.' In fact this is disingenuous on his part because race does figure prominently in the narrative, along with the other themes he rightly identifies. One of the most moving sections concerns a visit to the Tuskegee Institute in search of Booker T. Washington, whose autobiography, *Up from Slavery* (1901), had made a profound impression upon him as a child in Trinidad. It is typical of Naipaul that he should choose such a wildly unfashionable—not to say improbable—figure for this purpose, and it is a measure of his achievement that he should evoke in the reader the same admiration that he so obviously feels.

Above all, Naipaul's understanding of Booker T. Washington's achievement is seen against the background of the debilitating history which had produced him:

'Finally, I suppose, the most difficult (and most rewarding) thing in my life has been the fact that I was born a Negro and was forced, therefore, to effect some kind of truce with this reality.' The words by James Baldwin (among the most elegant handlers of the language) had stayed with me since I had read them, nearly thirty years before. 'Reality'—it was what I remembered and what I accepted; but now, in the South, in the middle of my own journey, I began to wonder whether the truce that every black man looked for hadn't in fact been with the irrationality of the world around him. And the achievement of certain people began to appear grander.

This 'grandness', as it were, emerges out of the many conversations—or, perhaps, mild but insistent interrogations—which Naipaul has with the people he encounters in the course of his journey. The tone is set at the beginning, in Atlanta, where he examines the phenomenon of black churches, hence the theme of faith to which he alludes.

But Naipaul's conception of faith, and with it the order which is consequent on that faith, encompasses more than the overtly religious. There is the simple faith in the

American way of life—so-called—in which religion and politics become inseparable; so that, for instance, at the end of the journey, we are taken into the world of a successful church minister with firm political convictions:

I asked him what a Jesse-crut was.

He said, 'It describes a conservative North Carolina Democrat who votes for Jesse Helms and people like Jesse Helms. They represent the conservative values of the Old South. Faith in God. A belief in limited government. A belief in free enterprise. Individual liberty and individual responsibility—two ideas that go together.'

And within those principles were contained all his politics . . . He showed me the text . . . of speech he had made in praise of Jesse Helms at a dinner for the senator . . . And very quickly then, while offering praise to the senator and criticising his enemies, the speech outlined the conservative program on taxes, welfare, government spending, education, communism; and fitted it together with freedom and religion.

'Art hallows, creates, makes one see,' the author says elsewhere, and this is demonstrated by the fact that the reader does not simply dismiss the above sketch as the kind of simple reactionary politics which makes necessary the liberation theology of the Latin American church; in fact, it is precisely this conception of individual liberty that has turned Nicaragua into an embattled democracy.

Naipaul insists that *A Turn in the South* will be his last travel book, which is a pity. Nobody writes finer prose in English; and now, as he begins to engage with the world at a profounder level, he is at last revealing his true stature.

ADD-WALL, MAJA-PEARCE
Hastings, Sussex

Descent into madness

Higher Ground: a novel in three parts

Caryl Phillips

London: Viking, 1989. 218pp. £11.95hb

The 'Sugar Ray Leonard of West Indian writing' is how a leading Caribbean critic welcomed Caryl Phillips' debut novel, *The Final Passage* (1985).¹ Style, a significant feature of Phillips' work, has come to denote in recent fiction the usurpation by the storyteller of the position of primacy in the novel once reserved for the story. There is a tradition of the new stretching as far back as Laurence Sterne and Cervantes through James Joyce to Amos Tutuola and Wilson Harris—figures who represent the uncompromising strain in this tradition. Younger writers like Phillips have wrestled from this tradition a novel which is a coalition of the social realism they sought to revise and debunk, and the experimentation with the 'aboutness' of writing that is their hallmark.

It would be a mistake to rest the case of contemporary writing on style alone. In fact the novel is a vehicle of ideas, and what is most striking about Phillips' new work of fiction is the extent to which he brings this argument—that of the rhetorical and ideologi-

¹ Kenneth Ramchand in 'A Personal View of West Indian Literature', *Tibisiri*, ed. M. Butcher (Sydney: Dangeroo Press, 1989. (*Tibisiri* was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 11(3) July 1989 pp 224–26.)

cal functions of fiction—centre stage. The subtitle to *Higher Ground* is one indication of this. Phillips declares his twin loyalty to style and idea by tackling one idea from three distinct styles and points of view. In each, the author is demonstrating the extent of his control over his craft and, at the same time, presenting a contradiction in the form of an illusion: that of his argument writing itself, as if free from authorial control. The 'Higher Ground' is both literal—in the move northwards of Irena, the central character of Part Three, a Polish Jewess escaping Nazi persecution— and metaphorical; characters from the first two parts achieve a degree of moral and ethical self-betterment through gigantic mental efforts in the midst of physical degradation, both in the setting of the late seventeenth-century slave trade on the African West Coast in Part One, and in prison in the American South of the 1960s in Part Two.

Phillips' two earlier novels both revolve around the twin axes of two geographies: Britain and the Caribbean; a neat binary opposition with migration as its nexus. Relationships between people are central, but the dislocation and relocation of migration is the testing factor, conditioning as it does the nature of the relationships and the directions they take. In *The Final Passage*, Leila's perspective is mediated by the hardships of travel and resettlement in an inhospitable landscape and among inhospitable people, in the company of an equally hostile man. The drift is from familiarity and stasis to strangeness and flux. By contrast, *A State of Independence* (1986), Phillips' second novel, retains the twin landscape setting but has the main character, Bertram Francis, returning to a land he thinks he knows but which has changed so much in his thirty-year absence that he cannot survive in it. If it is seen to be hard to leave and survive in the first novel, then the second asserts that it is even harder, if not impossible, to return. In both instances it is the immigrant, the one who has elected to move, who comes off worse than the people who stayed. Autobiographical in nature, both novels focus narrowly on the post-World War II experience of Britain and the Caribbean, and the migratory minds linking them.

This third novel is much more complex in that Phillips shies away from post-war Britain to embrace new continents—in this case Africa and North America—as well as moving back in time to the demise of the slave trade, then forward to the USA of the 1960s, and back once more, though not too far, to pre-World War II Europe, principally Britain and Poland. Instead of the perspective of a single character as in the first two books, *Higher Ground* presents three disparate voices unified across continents and time by their common condition: that of membership of an oppressed minority in a white majority or dominant culture. The main narrator of Part One, 'Heartland', a collaborationist with the British slavers, is both despised by the British, and hated by the African people he betrays. His is a double alienation.

Rudi of Part Two is in a similar predicament: hated as a black male in the white prison system, he is also misunderstood by blacks on account of his black consciousness-communist self-reeducation. Irena in Part Three is a white, but she is a woman, Polish in Britain with little English to begin with, and a Jewess, alone in a male-dominated world. She drifts into a relationship in which she loses her virginity dispassionately, accidentally becomes pregnant, ends up unhappily married and is beaten-up regularly, leaves her husband and, after a ten-year spell of incarceration in a mental hospital, meets (too late) a West Indian, Louis, who is on the verge of returning to the Caribbean having given up on Britain. The sexual encounters are mostly sordid, mutually exploitative and always stylishly (but not always appropriately) described. Phillips does

pile on the adverse conditions but he does so for a good reason: to show, I think, the important similarities between apparently unrelated conditions, and the existence not so much of a white race in control of a black race struggling through the centuries for emancipation of one form or another, as of individuals in peculiar positions, at odds with their time, however oppressive it may also be for the group or sex they belong to. All three appear to descend into madness, retreating from a world that proves too pressured to face by themselves. All suffer alone, a fact which might be instructive about the need for individuals to link up consciously with community, if that brand of individualism is to survive.

The most accomplished writing, *Cargo Rap*, forms Part Two of *Higher Ground*. It is written in the tradition of black power activists, such as Eldridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael, Michael X and Huey Newton; it is most indebted of all to George Jackson and the letter format of his writings, with its thematic blend of private grievance with public concern for black people as a whole: 'I'm part of a righteous people who anger slowly, but rage undamned.' (From *Soledad Brother: prison letters*, 1971.) Together they comprise the main thrust of Jackson's prison letters. Rudi's discourse is coarsely sexist (women are 'chicks' and men's 'squeezes'), homophobic ('Homosexuality is a sick but everyday fact of life') and black American jive speak (Christianity is 'slavish worship of a white faggot woodsman with long hippy hair who messed with the Jews and got what was coming to him'). In this sense it has less in common with the eminently sober, intelligent and readable original letters of George Jackson, and is more an amalgam of all the features that were problematic in this vital era in US and ultimately black world history. Rudi's personal historicising forms a perspective which seeks to re-interpret history and redress the imbalances of the black contribution to progress and key historical events. The life 'out there', which is denied to him is substituted by a life of ideas. If, as C L R James wrote, 'language is a world',² then Rudi carves out of it for himself a veritable black republic.

By widening the area and subject-matter of his brief, Caryl Phillips is throwing off the yoke of Caribbean British novelist to encompass the more sophisticated and universal remit adopted by figures such as Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and James Baldwin. He is also attempting to define the condition of the immigrant, the poor and the powerless. The record in this latest novel is one of defeat, despondency and a retreat from the world into an inner mental landscape beyond the access of the state and therefore in a strict sense free. Let us hope it does not prove to be beyond the novelist's imagination.

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² CLR James in a mimeograph, *Wilson Harris: a philosophical approach*.

* Fred D'Aguiar's latest collection of poetry, *Airy Hall* (1989) is reviewed on pp 279-88 of this issue of *Third World Quarterly*.

Perverse romance

Myal

Erna Brodber

London: New Beacon Books. 1988. 111pp. £9.50hb/£4.50pb

Ti Marie

Valerie Belgrave

Oxford: Heinemann International. 1988. 278pp. £4.95pb

Erna Brodber's *Myal* and Valerie Belgrave's *Ti Marie* exemplify two seemingly divergent directions in current women's fiction from the Caribbean: psychological realism and romance. Each genre has its legitimate, and often over-lapping, audience. Die-hard romantics who might not dream of reading *Myal* because it looks 'serious', will thoroughly enjoy *Ti Marie*. Though it may not quite be the 'Caribbean *Gone with the Wind*' that it advertises itself as (a dubious distinction), it is certainly a 'compelling tale of passion and adventure'. It is also perfectly respectable history masquerading in fancy dress. In television terms, *Ti Marie* is megabucks mini-series material; *Myal* is quality local programming.

Despite their obvious differences of genre, in a curious way, *Myal* and *Ti Marie* share a fundamental concern with defining a Caribbean 'identity' in womanist terms. If we consider Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) as a classic example of a woman's novel of romance, and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) as its parodic antithesis, then we begin to focus on the problem of identity and identification that the female Caribbean reader (and writer) often has in relation to Euro-centric romantic fiction and its more respectable counterparts. In *Lionheart Gal* (1986) Honor Ford Smith gives a brilliant account of the sense of alienation she felt when, as a schoolgirl in Jamaica, she read *Jane Eyre*. The fact that she, and many of her classmates at that prestigious high school would have looked like Bertha Mason, makes the account even more poignant: 'In the photograph of my class clustered round the plump (bleached) blond teacher from England, there are only three children with dark skin' (p 182):

In third form, they gave us *Jane Eyre* to read. It was the only piece of literature in which there was any mention of the Caribbean. It was also the only book by a woman which they had given us to read. We liked the bits about school and then we came upon the mad heiress from Spanish Town locked up in the attic. At first we giggled, knowing that it was Jane we were supposed to identify with in her quest for independence and dignity. Then we got to the part where this masterpiece of English Literature describes Bertha Mason as 'inferior, blue skinned . . . etc. Someone was reading it out loud in the class as was the custom. Gradually the mumbling and whispering in the class room crescendoed into an open revolt with loud choruses of 'It's not fair, Miss! Miss admitted it seemed unfair, but she went on to do nothing with that insight. I took the book home and finished it. It wasn't set for homework but I couldn't put it down. I skipped the part after the interrupted wedding scene, anxiously looking for a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence that might redeem the insane animal inferiority of the Caribbean. It was a woman's novel and I had liked so much of the earlier part, but I couldn't stomach the way I had been relegated to the attic. I felt betrayed. Dimly, a few pages in the novel had spoken to my life in a way which most of the nonsense we wasted our lives on at school did not. I remembered the contradictory conversations with my grandmother. [Often about race and class.] The conflicts began struggling to come

to the surface of my subconscious and be resolved. Bertha Mason forced me away from my fantasies for a moment and I vaguely glimpsed the possibility of a richer literature that revealed and illuminated the aspects of life that seemed covered forever in the unspoken. (pp 185-6)

In addition to pinpointing the primary problem of identity, the account brings to the fore the issue of the potentially conflicting motivations of reading itself: for 'homework' or for pleasure. For many Caribbean readers, reading literature and reading for pleasure are distinct activities, hence the popularity of escapist thrillers and romantic fiction. Mills and Boon sales figures for the Caribbean are revealing: average annual sales for Jamaica are approximately 150,000; for Trinidad 75,000; for Barbados 50,000; for Antigua 15,000. This amounts to a large readership, especially when you take into account those people who borrow instead of buying. The Caribbean/Black reader, blithely disregarding the racial specificity of the damsels on the cover of such romances, fully enters the gender fantasy. Shades of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) may occasionally loom but they are quickly banished to the realm of reality from whence they come. For the landscape of romance is a fictionalised world of idealised desire. Though the average reader maintains a sophisticated distance from the heroine, empathising with, yet simultaneously being more knowing than, the protagonist, the novels nevertheless reinforce the reader's psychic investment in the escapist values of the genre: men are sensitive souls, hiding in postures of dominance, from which they are seduced by needy, nurturing women. The details of the story change; the plot remains essentially the same.

Belgrave, constrained by the conventions of this rigidly formulaic genre, is nevertheless moved to Caribbeanise the scenario she has chosen. Yet, to truly indigenise the landscape of romance is to invert its stereotypes into realism. In a Caribbean historical romance, what, for instance, do you do with the problem of slavery?: invite readers to 'identify with' the Don Diegos, the Tessas, or both? The simile of the islands being 'like a necklace' (p 4) reifies the problem of perspective. The necklace, with its primary associations of jewellery, connotes the wealth that Europeans choked from the land; a necklace is also a strangulating implement for subduing slaves. Diego's unlikely conversation with his seven-year-old son —on the problem of how to get labour to work the land— attempts to set the record straight quite early in the novel. Illustrating Belgrave's sleight of hand, it exemplifies a convergence of sympathies:

'What we need is slaves, strong black slaves to work the cocoa,' he sighed, inadvertently speaking his thoughts out loud.

'But, Papa, there were some strong black men in Port of Spain,' came the unexpected response of the child.

'Jose, I was speaking to myself, but anyway, most of them are free men,' responded Diego. 'Trinidad is a refuge for anybody on the run. Slaves or no, they live just like us anyway. None of us having anything. How many of us are here? A handful of whites? And so many of us are already intermarried with Africans or Indians. My son, in a companionship of misery, there's little room for discrimination.' (pp 3-4)

Brodber's novel, set in early twentieth-century Jamaica, has its own burdens of exoticism: *obeah*, myal, spirit possession, flying Tanja Africans, phantom pregnancy, psychological impotence and poltergeists. This potentially sensationalist complex of circumstances is dignified by its very ordinariness. Comparison with Elizabeth Nuñez-Harrell's *When Rocks Dance* (1986), for example, which treats melodramatically the similar themes of necromancy and romance, immediately clarifies the differences be-

tween the point of view of the *voyeur* and that of the sympathetic insider. In Brodber's carefully realised rural world, the reader focuses less on the 'strangeness' of events and more on their import for characters who fully believe in a cosmology where the natural and the supernatural, the demonic and the divine regularly consort. For example, the novel opens with a thunderstorm that is clearly connected, in the eyes of Mass Cyrus, the Myal man, with the psychological trauma of the young woman, Ella, whom he is called upon to heal:

'What a bam-bam when that grey mass of muck comes out of this little Miss Ella lying down so stiff and straight, this little cat choked on foreign, this slabaster baby, shipped on a banana boat and here to short circuit the whole of creation.' (p 4)

Ella is 'choked on foreign', but her stifling began much earlier in her alienation from the reverse racist, Black world of childhood. Like her mother and her grandparents, she is displaced: '... long face, thin lip, pointed nose souls in a round face, thick lip, big eye country!' (p 8) Appropriately, 'big eye' has associations with 'red eye' and 'long eye', metaphors in Jamaican folk culture for envy and greed; the evil eye. Ella, envied and thus excluded from ordinariness, becomes invisible. Persecuting schoolmates and cynical teachers alike, simply look through her: "'That child is odd. No fight at all. Suppose the colour will carry her through.'" And they were more than a little vexed at that and built up resentment against her. For it was true.' (p 10)

Not surprisingly, it is in the world of books and the imagination that Ella is able to escape to an illusory sense of wholeness: 'When they brought out the maps and showed Europe, it rose from the paper in three dimensions, grew big, came right down to her seat and allowed her to walk on it, feel its snow, invited her to look deep down into its fjords and dykes. She met people who looked like her.' (p 11) This is the marvellous world of Alice in Wonderland, a resonant motif that is there in Brodber's earlier novel, *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* (1981). Ella, Nelli's near-white Other, is doubly imprisoned in a *kumbla** of race and gender. In the racist, imperial terms of the Kipling poem she recites with such feeling, Ella becomes '[h]alf devil and half child' 'the whiteman's burden'. But she is also the Black community's burden. For it is the community that has deformed her; she has been *zombified* by spirit thieves.

Her debilitating marriage to the white American with the Anglo-Saxon sounding name, Selwyn Langley, whose family are 'chemists, manufacturers of herbal medicines and today doctors and travelling medical lecturers' (p 42), introduces Ella to the respectable other side of the world of alternative medicine and folk practices in which she has been reared, and which has failed her. She has the opportunity to live out her fantasies. Her attempts to dredge up that past are potentially therapeutic. But Langley alchemically transforms her richly textured world to the flatness of minstrelsy. His play, *Caribbean Days and Nights*, based on her remembered childhood is the 'biggest coon show ever' (p 80). Langley's distorting response to Ella's recreated Caribbean world is, in its profusion of fertility, reminiscent of the alienating landscape that so intimidates the unnamed husband of Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The Caribbean setting is a parody of luxuriance, a threateningly exuberant wonderland.

Brodber's definition of what the Selwyn/Ella relationship might have been in another time and place brings us back, with more than a little irony, to the romance of Belgrave's *Ti Marie*:

* Jamaican creole *coobla-calubash*, used in the novel as an image of entrapment in self-protective artifice.

The world's other most famous prisoner is Nelson Mandela. His incarceration has by now lasted so long that it has threatened to become a grim joke, and it takes someone of Soyinka's standing and undoubted humanity to exploit its potential. Exploit it he does with all the skill at his command. If one thing in this short collection of poems demonstrates to conclusive effect Soyinka's assurance in the face of the multiple stupidities of the world, it is his inclusion of what is to all intents and purposes a comic poem in the title sequence about Mandela. Soyinka loves this sort of thing. Faced with a dictator, his instinctive response is simply to laugh in his face. Confronted with such an unexpected response, the dictator is disoriented, but preens himself a little self-consciously before attempting, somewhat awkwardly, to laugh back. Yet, surrounding and enclosing Soyinka's mockery is a voice taut with suppressed pain and modulated dignity. There have been many poems about Soweto, but none quite as striking as this:

We wished to bury our dead,
We rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar's.
The right to congregate approved;
Hold procession, eulogize, lament
Procured for standard fee. All death tariff
Settled in advance, receipted, logged.
A day to cross the barriers of our skin,
Death was accorded purchase rights, a brief licence
Subject to withdrawal - we signed acceptance
On the dotted line - 'orderly conduct' et cetera.
We now proceed to render earth's to earth.

Soyinka is a versatile man. A tart assessment might have it that he is not quite so good a poet as a playwright, and not quite so good a novelist as a poet. *Aké* (1981), his memoir of childhood, suggests that his most spectacular talent might even lie in the area of autobiography. In reality, I doubt if he very much cares. The pieces in this volume are full to the brim with wit and verbal dexterity. Whether they are poems or not is perhaps a minor matter. Let the poets decide.

Soyinka's style is a cross between the indigenous heroic and the overseas lyrical. There are certainly occasions in this book when he seems to be exploiting traditional forms, as in his tribute to Muhammad Ali, which reads rather like a Senegalese *poème gymnique*. Yet, Soyinka is forever escaping categories. No sooner have you pinioned his work with your heady, classificatory eye, then it is squirming out of its box, angrily inviting a response.

There is a marvellous moment in this book when Soyinka takes Pik Botha's comment about detaining Mandela 'for the same reason as the Allied Powers are holding Rudolph Hess', and develops it to its logical extreme. It is so daring that perhaps only Wole Soyinka, with his enormous prestige, could have made it successful. In the face of such adamant mockery, no wonder empires collapse, and let us hope this one does, too.

The volume is a great improvement on some of his previous poetic work (there are also pieces about the USA and about love); it is probably the best since *Idanre* (1967). The reason is that there is nothing written in the hectoring vein which Soyinka sometimes slips into when his humour runs out, and which is so much less devastating than this quick-witted scorn. Once again, one marvels at the consistency of his voice. For all the added skill, there is a remarkable parity between this volume and his earliest work. He has always been the same man, and whether shrouded in prisoner's fatigues or

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clouds of glory, invariably rises above everything, smirking slightly as if caught out in the most delectable prank.

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London

Aesthetics of struggle

Organise and Act: the Natal Workers Theatre Movement 1983-1987

Astrid von Kotze

Durban, Natal: Culture and Working Life Publications, University of Natal. 1988. 127pp. n/p

Ten Years of Staffrider Magazine 1978-1988

Edited by Andries Walter Oliphant and Ivan Vladislavić

Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1988. 411pp. £8.95pb†

Organise and Act is both a homage and a testimony: it is dedicated to the memory of Simon Ngubane, one of the cultural workers killed by vigilantes in December 1989 in South Africa together with three of his comrades; it also bears witness to the role played by cultural activists in the present struggle.

Organise and Act presents the genesis of the Workers Theatre Movement, and its evolution over four vital years, linked as it was with the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), then with its offshoot, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In describing the birth and development of the Black Workers' Movement in the larger Natal area, the book shows the problems confronting this popular form of cultural activity in a particularly difficult political and social environment; the strategies it has used in order to try to overcome them; and the response of the thousands of spectators who have attended the performances. It also raises the question of how much this type of cultural activity can contribute to change, and what kind of change.

The plays are concerned both with factory-floor conditions encountered by the workers, and with the plight of the people living in the homelands, thus highlighting the causes of migration to the peri-urban areas. The problems affecting the homes of the workers are not neglected, nor are those specific to black women: the treble handicap under which they labour on account of their colour, sex and status - both at work and at home - is viewed against the background of the general exploitation suffered by all the workers. It is relevant to mention in this context that the Sarmcol BTR plant in Howick, some thirty miles north of Durban, where the dismissal of nearly one-thousand workers took place in 1985, is one of the British-owned firms linked with multi-national companies.

As Ari Sitas, one of the observer/participants has pointed out, the plays had utili-

* Robert Fraser's *West African Poetry: a critical history* (1986) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 10(3) July 1988, pp 1360-62.

† Available in the UK from the Africa Book Centre, 38 King Street, London WC2; £9.50 including post.

tarian value because they helped to break down barriers between the various unions and the workers, between the workers and their families, and between the workplaces and the community.* They also helped reinforce unity and solidarity, besides being an element in the conscientisation of both participants and audiences. His co-worker, Astrid von Kotze, also emphasises the element of the re-appropriation of culture by the working class represented by such activities. The plays were not brought to the workers by a theatre-group from elsewhere, but sprang from the workers themselves, giving them new confidence as creators rather than mere labour-units. The plays were collectively elaborated and developed in workshops, even if one or the other of the participants provided the lead, as was often the case with Alfred Qabula, Mi Hlatshwayo and Nise Malange. They were then discussed with the shop-stewards to assess their validity, and finally presented to the audiences in a way which, to varying degrees, demanded their participation. This was made easier by the fact that most of the plays were in Zulu, or a mixture of Zulu and English, and, at least in Natal, drew from a common heritage. As von Kotze points out, using a phrase borrowed from the British workers' theatre of the 1960s, 'it (was) a property-less theatre for a property-less class'. If one can speak of a 'poor theatre', it is in the manner advocated by Grotowski; the 'poverty' lying in the almost total absence of props (the use of wigs, false noses, the occasional mask, banners and placards); the maximalisation of the expression of ideas and feelings through what can be called the 'meta-text', that is the text itself- or the 'pre-text', since a large place was left for improvisation; and the combination of miming, dancing and reciting, which require corporal, facial and vocal mastery. The performers also updated the situations or adapted them to their own circumstances and milieus. Hence the widely enthusiastic response from audiences particularly taken both by the relevance of the themes, and by the use of humour involving personalities they were familiar with, be they 'impimpis', or distant characters who 'pull the strings', such as managing directors or heads of state.

Organise and Act is not only a source of information on the new development of proletarian history, but it leads to reflection on the role theatre can play in a pre-revolutionary situation. The book is amply illustrated with photographs taken during the workshops and performances. It is brought further to life by the many comments and observations of the main participants. The only cause of regret for the foreign reader is the absence of a map showing where the conflicts arose and the performances took place.

In Mike Kirkwood's initial remarks in *Ten Years of Staffrider Magazine*, he points to *Staffrider*'s need 'to discover in collaboration with the cultural activists of the working class the format which would enable the magazine to play its part in integrating this new development within the new national culture as a whole'. In his article, 'Remembering *Staffrider*', Kirkwood looks back (with some nostalgia) to the time when the magazine - now in a new A3 format- was its original form and size (foolscap). The editorial of the first issue (March/April 1978) spoke of it as a 'skelm of sarts' (*skelm*: Afrikaans for 'rogue'). *Ten Years of Staffrider Magazine* in no way fits this description. In place of the congenial, somewhat anarchic jumble of stories, poems, graphics and photographs, is a neatly-packaged, well-ordered compendium of what the editors have chosen to retain from the preceding ten years. *Ten Years of Staffrider Magazine*, which

* Talk by Ari Sitas and Astrid von Kotze at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, November 1987

comprises issues 3 and 4 of Volume 7, is arranged according to genres: stories, photography, poetry, essays and interviews, as well as popular history, with occasional graphics. There is also a very handy cumulative index of all the works, excepting reviews, which have appeared over the years, and the cover of each issue is reproduced (four per page). The nostalgia mentioned earlier is perhaps enhanced by the sepia-colour photographs which resemble aging prints. The visual effect of the original, as well as its unexpectedness have gone, but what of the spirit?

As with all anthologies, this one is highly subjective. Nevertheless, the reader will find here *some* of the best and most representative texts. Out of fairness, the editors seem to have given equal space to virtually all the contributors, whatever their past production, in terms of length or quality, and this probably accounts for the small representation of Mafika Gwala, and the absence of an absolutely stunning piece of personal and collective reportage on the Steve Biko funeral, Miriam Tlali's 'Soweto Hijack'. There are recent additions, though, which are all the more important as unlike Mike Kirkwood's look backwards—Chris van Wyk's 'Staffrider and the Politics of Culture', and Njabulo Ndebele's 'The Writer as Critic and Interventionist' are pointers towards a future which may have clearer ideological positions (read non-racial and less populist); be more editorially selective in terms of creative production; and be less individualistic, more collective, in its concerns. In recent years, writers of all denominations and ideological groupings—be they Black Consciousness-oriented or non-racial—have increasingly insisted on the need to hone their craft, if only to make it more effective in expressing their political ideas. There is also a tendency to delve deeper into everyday life, as well as into past experiences, not simply from the point of view of cataloguing oppression, but because resistance begins with the affirmation of one's identity in all its complexity. This point has been developed at length and quite convincingly by Njabulo Ndebele in his essay, 'Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts On South African Fiction', which is reproduced in the volume. It was a point already inscribed in Dikobe wa Mogale's essay, 'Art is not Neutral' (*Staffrider* 4(2) July/August 1981) which is absent from the collection, where Dikobe affirmed:

... we should bring about the necessary conditions for all cultural products to reach the people. This is not to say that the artist has to sacrifice the artistic worth of his creations. It is to say that we have to struggle in all ways so that the artist creates for the people and so that the people in turn raise their cultural level and draw nearer to the artist.

Six years on, Farouk Asvat, in an interview with Francis Fallor, concurs by saying: 'We should never separate aesthetic issues from other aspects of the liberation struggle' (*Tribute*, October 1987). While he declares himself convinced that different approaches to art can be mutually constructive, 'though no poetry should tell people what they already know', he immediately adds that 'lots of oral poetry is challenging, and lots of written poetry is flat'.

Whatever happens in the future, *Staffrider* will stand as having made literary history; there, the beat and pulse of the country could be felt, and new and confirmed talents be watched. If only for this reason, this commemorative book will be essential for foreign readers, many of whom never saw the actual magazine, as well as for South Africans themselves. Only the years to come will tell us in what direction and in what magazin(e)s the 'national culture' will gain ground and means of expression.

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Roots and affinities

Tripmaster Monkey: his fake book

Maxine Hong Kingston

London: Picador. 1989. 340pp. £12.95hb

The Joy Luck Club

Amy Tan

London: William Heinemann. 1989. 288pp. £11.95hb

Lapse of Time

Wang Anyi

Translated from the Chinese

Beijing: Panda. 1988. 256pp. £2.95pb

Love in a Small Town

Wang Anyi

Translated from the Chinese by Eva Hung

Hong Kong: Renditions. 1988. 104pp. £6.50pb

Song Wukong, the monkey, is evoked by Whitman Ah Sing, part-time poet, full-time salesman, the Chinese-American hero of Maxine Hong Kingston's novel, *Tripmaster Monkey: his fake book*. Song Wukong first appeared in ancient Chinese legend as the mythical guide of the heroic monk, Xuan Zang or Tripitaka, who in the seventh century AD went to India to acquire sacred Buddhist scriptures for the Tang court. As the early legends evolved into operas and plays, the charismatic figure of the magic monkey came to the fore as hero, until the sixteenth-century writer, Wu Chengen, immortalised him as the protagonist of one of China's best loved vernacular novels, *Pilgrimage to the West*.

With his manifold talents in the military and literary arts, and his expertise, Song Wukong serves as guide and alter-ego in Whitman's search for identity and community. Legends of ancient China, from *Pilgrimage to the West* and from the equally celebrated, fourteenth-century *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, intertwine with passages from Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurid Briggs* (1910) as Whitman attempts to gather the disparate strands of his double heritage to recreate, on US soil, the great immigrant theatrical experience: a serial play which, as the text implies, aims to chronicle the history of the Chinese in the New World in the language of Chinese fable.

The novel of quest serves as an effective vehicle for Kingston's many concerns. The myths and stories strewn throughout these pages, with their cryptic clues to the initiated reader, are not explored or rewritten; rather, they are employed to illustrate the rich fantasy life of the immigrant, and are far more important to him than linear history. Hong Kingston, in her earlier works (*The Woman Warrior* (1976) and *China Men* (1980) collections of folklore and anecdote oddly categorised as non-fiction for their

biographical and historical content), has already explored the indefatigable imaginative resources of the Chinese immigrant, and his often fabulised oral histories. Her characters are incorrigible liars, tireless talkers and fantasists; here, in her first conventional novel, she penetrates the depths of the migrant's psyche, revealing these ambiguous talents—the real core of the storyteller's art—for what they are: the outsider's defence against isolation; a call to community beyond language or race; and the continuing process by which a new identity may be constructed. This obsession with talking, with manic verbal invention and tale-spinning, leads Whitman Ah Sing through the scar-pitted cityscapes of twentieth-century America.

Kingston's prose is tense and jagged, her sentences rapid and fragmented, often unmusical and occasionally oblique, suggesting both the urgency of Whitman's quest and the every-day alienation experienced by the non-white American. Kingston's anger irradiates the book, leavened only by her wit; she constantly indicts clichés and stereotypes—the paternalistic or patronising readings of East Asians by average white America that Kingston warns distort immigrants' perception and representations of themselves. The goal of Whitman's quest is to subvert these texts and representations in the epic cycle of plays he eventually succeeds in staging. He also has a wider aim: to bring together the entire East Asian community in his neighbourhood in a celebration of their new and multiple identities, and in productive confrontation with the white majority. There is surprisingly little plot in the novel, such plot as there is covering a few days in the life of Whitman Ah Sing. It describes in passing the transfer of his affections from the Chinese-American Nanci to the white American Taña, chronicles the vagaries of his career as a toy salesman, and later follows his progress as a prospective dole-collector. Kingston employs a picaresque narrative technique most effectively to illustrate the marginalisation of the unemployed—particularly the old, the disabled, women and non-whites. In one of the most compelling sequences of the book, Whitman encounters an old Chinese woman at the unemployment office, and a spontaneous alliance is established between the widely separated immigrant generations as both struggle through tangled yards of bureaucratic red tape. In such passages, Kingston's considerable and contrasting talents are reconciled: the incisive and satirical gaze, the anger tempered with farcical humour, and the prose, almost entirely devoid of lyricism, studded with sudden flashing insights.

Divided into nine long chapters, *Tripmaster Monkey* shares the rambling, episodic style of Kingston's earlier books, while being at once more stylistically dense and structurally concise. The chapters, rich with incident, parody and satire, are virtually self-contained. Yet, in ending each chapter in the Chinese exhortation to read on and discover the protagonist's destiny, the author succeeds in maintaining a degree of narrative cohesion. Characters are introduced in their own voices, in diffuse, witty monologues, only to disappear, leaving the reader to wonder whether Kingston is consciously emulating the techniques of the unnamed classical Chinese texts to which she constantly alludes. Her use of dialogue and monologue to polyphonic effect certainly derives from the Chinese narrative mode; discarding the Faulknerian method of multiple narration so dear to American writers, and the introspection characteristic of the modern novel, Kingston listens to her characters discussing, debating, rhapsodising, haranguing each other with raw, bawdy or painful details of their lives.

Ultimately, *Tripmaster Monkey* is only partly successful; it is a flawed masterwork, overwhelmed both by the diversity of its overlapping images (Vietnam, the 1960s, beat

poetry, allusions to Rilke, all-embracing American culture), and by the chapter-long monophonic tirade with which Whitman concludes his epic cycle. Attempting to sum up too many of the novel's themes, and immersed in an embarrassing self-scrutiny obsessed with negatively defined racial characteristics, Winston's tirade does little justice to the novel, it rather deflects interest from the real strengths of *Tripmaster Monkey*: Whitman's complex chrysalid relationship with his new wife, the mirror-relationship between art and community, and the celebration of life in a world of nuclear proliferation, war and racial hatred. At their best, Kingston's re-evocation in the novel of the scenes of China's symbolic history, and her relocation of these events on North American ground, are visionary; her voice's uneven grain, her political intensity, and her unfaltering gaze place her in the company of some of the late twentieth century's most eminent chroniclers of the migrant experience: Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje and Timothy Mo.

Amy Tan's first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*-- already a great success in the USA owes much to Kingston, at least in its themes: the Chinese imagination displaced, the gap between past and present, relationships between mothers and daughters, conflicts between generations. *The Joy Luck Club* is structured in the Faulknerian mode so familiar through over-usage, of overlapping subjective monologues delivered by a variety of narrators; in Tan's case, four daughters and their mothers. In recent years this technique has been deployed to great effect by mainland Chinese writers, in Dai Houying's *Stones of the Wall* (1979) and Bei Dao's *Waves* (1974). Both writers-- Dai in particular-- succeed where Tan conspicuously fails, in creating an authentic chorus of contrasting voices. Tan's narrators--Chinese mothers and American daughters--sing in identical melancholy cadences. The only discernible difference is in their landscapes; Tan's feudal China, an orientalist's dream landscape, is a place of boundfoot maidens and wretched child brides, boat-festivals, moon-festivals, glamorous poverty, oppression and ossification. Tan's California, on the other hand, is the familiar bourgeois landscape; its resident women, Chinese by race, are American in every other particular, chained to the metaphorical kitchen sink and drowned in a soapy deluge of domestic bilge.

Tan illustrates, perhaps unintentionally, the gulf between the exotic places of cultural memory and the dismal locations of diurnal reality. Even the mothers, whose catalogue of miseries is unrelenting, seem only to have exchanged the elegantly recalled past of misogynist feudal oppression for the dull present of displacement. Some of their memories are moving: children left on the roadside during the civil war, a son lost in a callous accident during a family picnic by the sea, sisters separated by a lifetime and a language. Tan's attempt to find an authentic way to present oral narrative is commendable, though unsuccessful. The influence of the Native American writer, Louise Erdrich, is discernible, both in the language and the structure of *The Joy Luck Club*, but whereas Erdrich's cold, studied prose effectively conceals a resonant outrage at the systematic extermination of her people, Tan's similarly muted style often disguises a paucity of content--or of experience. Her lyrical evocations of the lost homeland derive, all too often, from the cluttered shelves of *chinoiserie*, more reminiscent of Ezra Pound than of the Chinese poets. Her China is the ageless land of Western romance; only the odd signpost points out the actual location of the mothers' tales in twentieth-century Chinese history.

The Joy Luck Club leaves an overriding impression of loss of self, along with the

inevitable loss of cultural identity, in present-day America. The novel concludes with its first narrator, Jingmei or June—whose voice seems to echo Tan's own—returning to China to rediscover roots and affinities. This conclusion would have been far more effective, and affirmative, if Tan had portrayed Jingmei's character more vividly; but of all the novel's women, Tan's seeming alter-ego is the most insubstantial. If Tan had concentrated on one central relationship and two voices, her focus would have been more certain; the multiplicity of identical voices obscures the real potential and pathos of her stories. The disparate elements of *The Joy Luck Club* ultimately seem to have been randomly assembled by a consortium of editors to capitalise on a 'new' commercial interest, the Asian immigrant experience. Yet, the theme of return has been handled with more depth, and to greater effect, by other Asian writers, such as Taiwan's Tao Yang or Britain's Leena Dhingra.*

China's Wang Anyi, at thirty-five a close contemporary of Tan, has by contrast a voice and vision uniquely her own. Maxine Hong Kingston recommends her work to US readers as a good place to begin their study of contemporary Chinese literature, possibly because Wang is one of the most unusual writers at work anywhere in the world today. Somewhat bafflingly, British commentators have criticised her for a reticence which they attribute to her membership of the official Chinese Writers' Association, whereas in Hong Kong and Holland, she has been praised for the unusual angles from which she surveys 'taboo' subjects. *Lapse of Time*, a collection of her better-known short fiction recently published in China, displays the range of her subject-matter while attempting to confine her to the realm of officially accepted topics. Yet, even in her most innocuous tales, she goes against the grain of official discourse, which she satirises, personalises or simply ignores. Her real interest is in the development of human relationships—between children and adults, students and teachers, rich and poor, and, most unforgettably, men and women. *Lapse of Time* (named after a superior translation of the mistitled story, *The Flow†*) is an attractive, if restrained collection, revealing a young writer in search of a voice. Original, subjective and humorous, it depicts with conviction the underbelly of daily life in Shanghai: the crowded, minuscule houses and the crammed buses, the fraught family relationships and the lonely lack of communication.

Love in a Small Town is, by contrast, raw, personal and sensual; Wang's consummate handling of the taut novella form results in her best (translated) work to date, a disturbing study of sexual passion, repression and violence. A first, superficial reading of the early chapters reveals a resemblance to the post-modern objectivism of Samuel Beckett—dwelling on odd, dislocated physical details—or Marguerite Duras—mapping the geometry of desires beyond the sensual in spare, poetic prose. A young man and a young woman, minor dancers in a troupe, crippled by bad training, obsessively practice together, alternately seducing and torturing each other in a half-denial of their inarticulate feelings. As their passion develops, Wang's painterly eye dwells on their contours and contortions with a unique sensuousness. In describing the small town in which the lovers are domiciled, she evokes a provincial world entirely Chinese, intertwining a hundred humorous, earthy anecdotes with the main symbolic motif of the crippled dancers.

* Leena Dhingra's *Anrutvela* (1988) was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 11(2) April 1989, pp 169–75.

† Wang Anyi's *The Flow* was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 11(3) July 1989, pp 217–19.

What appears at first to be an apolitical dissection of an obsession, dissolves into a haunting love song with striking political reverberations. It employs the imagery of traditional Chinese verse, covering, to some extent, the terrain of folklore commemorated so vividly by the film-makers of the fifth generation, Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige. *Love in a Small Town* is a uniquely bitter, dissenting love story. Wang's use of correspondences—the water-carriers' cries and the water imagery—moves the story onto the planes of legend; but the lyricism of her account is underwritten by the fierce critique implicit in her seemingly dispassionate exploration of the protagonists' souls. This is a story of the relentlessness of nature, the seducer and betrayer; the textures of a watermelon or the stench of a diarrhoea epidemic, the disembodied music of longing or the brute collision of skin, sinew and bone, are layered over each other with the same loving brush. Love in a repressive climate is painted as a short sojourn in hell with a long, burning aftermath in purgatory. Women in Wang's fictional universe are particularly singled out to suffer; they also have more resilience and fortitude. Though she portrays with unstinting compassion the dumb pain of her male protagonist's sexual suffering, she is equally incisive in her delineation of his moral cowardice. Faced with his lover's pregnancy, he shrinks away from responsibility, while she alone bears the consequences of her silence and her refusal to submit to an abortion: demotion, disgrace and ostracism. To the Western reader, the extent of the taboos placed on extra-marital affairs may seem excessive, and the resultant suffocating guilt incomprehensible. Yet, the author, in her excavation of the deepest recesses of the Chinese psyche, finds relics of antiquated Confucian ethics in these depths combined with the more oppressive aspects of misread communist doctrine. Yet, in the small town, the woman finds redemption in dishonour, as earlier she had found release in illicit love. Motherhood, for her, is an affirmation of self, the assertion of autonomy over her own body and spirit. Solitude is the price she pays for inner freedom.

Wang is a writer who openly disavows political intent: she refers to *Love in a Small Town* as a novel about love, not sexuality. But her rich, multi-layered narrative has obvious political implications; casually placed details subtly locate the narrative in the last years of, and the years immediately following, the Cultural Revolution. The crippled, stunted bodies of the dancers can be read as a metaphor for the long wasted years and stunted sensibilities of the lost generation to which Wang and her characters belong.

Writing from within her own culture, articulating the splits in community and the construction of sensibility, Wang has supreme confidence in her identity and in her readership. This gives her an advantage over many writers who, dislocated from language and landscape, desperately polemicise or evade, turning their texts into tracts or fables. Wang's writing is marked, above all, by the qualities she prizes most—often misleadingly described by her critics as individualism: a commitment to subjective authenticity and an openness to experience in all forms.

AAMER HUSSEIN

London

Pioneering art

The Twelfth Man: poems

Iftikhar Arif

Translated from the Urdu by Brenda Walker

London: Forest Books. 1989. 69pp. £6.95pb

Since all good poetry is unique, it is only through gross simplification that it can be categorised at all. This fact should not be lost sight of in appraising the poetry of Iftikhar Arif. While I agree with Annemarie Schimmel's preface that Arif is in the tradition of the 'progressive writers' (p xii), I should add that he is also an architect of that tradition in the 1980s. Hence, his poetry is not merely the stereotypical verse of a constraining tradition, but the pioneering art of an emerging one.

This selection contains translations of poems on all the major themes expressed in the poet's earlier collection of verse, *Mehr-e-do-neem* (*A Divided Sun*, 1983): oppression and the powerlessness of the artist or intellectual; metaphysical concerns and existential despair; expatriation and nostalgia; and love, lust and nostalgic memories.

Oppression is the central theme of the progressive tradition in the Urdu literature of the twentieth century. Faiz Ahmad Faiz, noted for his anti-exploitation stance and revolutionary fervour, generally expressed this through the language of amorous verse. Iftikhar Arif's poetry makes an important departure from this tradition by using language and symbolism not associated with such verse. In 'Written in the season of fear', for instance, the ruling metaphor is that of the shooting of birds, powerfully expressing the fear and helplessness of the oppressed. This effectively reverses the symbolic value of the metaphor as used in the traditional Urdu *ghazal*, where the beloved is the hunter, and the lover one who revels in being hunted. Another major symbol Arif uses is the martyrdom of the Prophet of Islam's grandson, Imam Hussain, in the Battle of Karbala, at the hands of the Omayyad ruler, Yazid bin Abu Sufiyan. In 'Perspectives', this symbol is used for oppression everywhere, and for eternal conflict between the just and the unjust, good and evil:

On the banks of the Euphrates or any other river,
All armies are the same, all swords are the same (p 13)

Against this evil, the artist, or the intellectual, endeavours to struggle. Being cognisant of the discrepancy between his aspirations and power, he evokes the heroic spirit while remaining fully aware of his impotence, which is expressed symbolically through the image of birds descending onto live wires ('Migration'). He does, however, affirm the possibility of hope:

No matter how much of a coward I am,
I belong to those whose sons laid down their lives
For what they believed in, for the pledge they took. (p 51)

Yet this hope is vitiated because the aspiring intellectual is 'Besieged by the armies of petty pharaohs' (p 67). The poet's aspirations are summed up explicitly in 'Postscript':

Lord! Give me that inner strength to write words which are needed on this earth,
Needed to stop the barrenness that spreads so fast (p 69)

This stance is adopted in the face of an intellectual despair which is the consequence of witnessing the lack of justice and ethical norms in the universe. This awareness is expressed powerfully in 'The twelfth man', one of the best poems on the philosophy of Absurdism normally associated with Eugène Ionesco and Franz Kafka. The central image in this poem is that of an extra player in a game of cricket who gets the chance to play only if another player stops playing. The persona of the poet extends this to stand for a symbol of the metaphysical truth about existence itself: out of the bad luck of one person comes the good luck of another; out of the ruin of someone comes another's opportunity; out of the poverty of the many comes the wealth of an elite; out of the powerlessness of the people comes the might of the rulers . . . one could apply this philosophy to many aspects of life. The poet reiterates the point that the universe is hostile to aspirations, merit and prayer alike, in 'And the wind was silent' and 'How wrong I was'. However, Iftikhar Arif again leaves ground for hope when he concludes in 'Dialogue' that there is a controlling intelligence in the universe, and observes in 'The Hindola' that those who rise will also fall; despite appearances to the contrary, there may be justice in the universe.

Expatriation is one of the major themes of modern literature. Iftikhar Arif has himself experienced expatriation, as well as the deracination and alienation consequent upon it. In the poems, 'Double shift' (working day and night for extra payment), he expresses the motivations of people who leave their native land for economic betterment. Perhaps the most effective poem on this theme is 'Another kind of lullaby', where a child is stopped from spontaneous play because the norms of the country of immigration are against spontaneity:

I asked the mother of Ali Iftikhar to stop our son from chasing butterflies,
Stop him from asking for swings
Just because he can see these flying ships in neighbouring gardens. (p 63)

The poem is also a strong indictment of the economic oppression of immigrants in capitalist consumer societies. One consequence of expatriation, the sense of loss and nostalgic desire for the past, is expressed in 'So what do we do now?', 'Balance sheet', and 'Memories'. The latter evokes memories of the sunlit streets of India and Pakistan:

From the lanes of my childhood, glass from ball-shattered windows now pierces my eyes.

Nostalgia is also an important element in amorous verse, and has been expressed by all Urdu poets. The problem for a contemporary poet is how to express tender emotions and evoke pathos, without sounding maudlin or sentimental. Iftikhar Arif has achieved this by using *vers libre* for the most part, which distances his work from traditional metrical verse. Another device which he uses is unique: he refers to an anecdote through either monologue or dialogue. The anecdote invites the reader to participate in the emotion evoked without its using emotive, and necessarily stereotyped, language. 'To the memory of September', 'She said to me' and 'Story of a night' all use anecdotes. Sometimes an unusual image is also used to convey meaning:

And then suddenly it began snowing heavily in the midst of bright sunshine,
So heavily that the wings of the high flying bird became its coffin. (p 37)

In this strikingly powerful image, the incongruity of the weather stands for the lover's perception: when love is withdrawn the summer becomes winter; emotions also die just as the bird dies. 'Story of a night' is another beautiful love poem, and its aesthetic

appeal is that of the good *ghazal*. The distinction made between love and lust forms the theme of other poems, such as 'Distance is but a moment'.

Urdu poetry, perhaps more than most European poetry, is extremely difficult to translate. The translator can either render the literal meaning of the verse, in which case the symbolism and the figurative language may become unintelligible to culture- and tradition-bound English readers, or can translate creatively, in which case the result may deviate far too much from the original. Ahmed Ali chooses to translate faithfully from the *ghazal* in *The Golden Tradition* (1973) and succeeds in conveying the meaning of this kind of poetry, while Daud Kamal catches the spirit of Faiz in his creative translation in *Selected Poems of Faiz in English* (1984). Ghalib, Kishwar Naheed, Munir Niazi and other poets have all been translated with more or less success. Brenda Walker, however, has been fully successful in capturing the quintessential Iftekhar Arif. She has, for the most part, not deviated from the literal meaning itself, but she has done so in places to give added significance to the translation. For instance, in 'To the morning of September', she has changed the poet's 'spring' to 'summer', since Western readers' associations with summer are similar to the associations of Indian and Pakistani readers with spring. However, by changing Iftekhar Arif's 'that year' into 'summer of '83' she has substituted indeterminate past for a fixed time, which is not equally effective. Likewise, the emphasis in the ending of the Urdu original 'My hands empty of the rod of Moses' on the powerlessness of the intellectual has been lost in the line: 'One lonely, helpless man'. These, however, are only minor lapses. On the whole the translation is not only competent and sensitive but also authentically poetic, the translations reading like original poems in English. Both the poet and the translator should be congratulated for having contributed to the body of Urdu literature available in translation.

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Touching on taboos

Zayni Barakat

Gamal Al-Ghitani

Translated from the Arabic by Farouk Abdel-Wahab

London: Viking, 1988, 241pp, £11.95hb

Zayni Barakat is Gamal Al-Ghitani's first and probably best known novel. It was first published in Damascus in 1974 (and not in 1971 in Cairo as both Edward Said and the blurb on the cover state) and established Al-Ghitani as one of the major writers of his generation. The 1960s generation, a richly diverse and prolific group of writers, includes such major names as Baha Tahir, Yahya Tahir Abdulla, Abd Al-Hakim Qasim, Ibrahim Aslan, Muhammad Al-Bisati and Sun'alla Ibrahim. Although Al-Ghitani is the best known in the West, his colleagues deserve the same attention from Western publishers and translators. This group of writers was responsible for opening new horizons before Arabic narrative, changing the prevalent literary sensibility, and invigorating narrative presentation.

From the outset of his literary career, and after a brief period of conventional narrative, Al-Ghitani distinguished himself with a unique approach to language and narrative strategies which reached its zenith in his subsequent novels, particularly in his interesting and fascinating trilogy, *Kitāb Al-Tajalliyāt* (The Book of Theophanies, 1983-87). He uses archaic classical language, derived first from the discourse of historical annals and later from Sufi and mystic literature, both to root modern narrative in a traditional literary context and to mirror the present in the past. The gap between the language and the events narrated, and the use of historic masks, separates the world of narrative from reality in order to reshape, modify, or exaggerate certain aspects of it. It distances the situation in order to probe its inmost depths, and places it in a wider historical perspective to attenuate its harshness.

This technique which Al-Ghitani developed in his first collection of short stories, *Awraq Shāhh 'Āsh Mundh Alf 'Ām* (Papers of a Young Man Who Lived One Thousand Years Ago, 1969), is evident in *Zayni Barakat*, which is set in early sixteenth-century Cairo during the period of turbulent transition heralding the change from the Mamluks to the Ottomans. It deals with the loneliness, tribulations and rise of its protagonist, Zayni Barakat, to one of the most powerful offices of his time, Markets Inspector, and attempts to investigate the ramifications of his puritanical but stern rule and its impact on a wide variety of his countrymen. It is equally the novel of Said Al-Juhayni's intellectual dilemma and frustrated love affair. As a novel, it is Al-Ghitani's most successful experiment in employing traditional language and a historical setting to address contemporary reality, because it is his only novel in this vein in which the subject matter is in complete harmony with its language and technique. Here, the text's innovation is part and parcel of its dialogue with the conventional Arabic novel. Although both the language and the setting are different, the relational networks constituting its basic narrative structure are closely linked to the work of the grand master of the Arabic novel, Naguib Mahfouz. The relationship between Said Al-Juhayni and his shaikh Abu Al-Su'ud echoes that of Said Mahran and his shaikh Junaydi in Mahfouz's *Al-Liṣṣ wa-l-Kilāh* (Thief and Dogs), and that between Said and Samah is reminiscent of Kamal's unrequited love for 'Ayida in the second part of Mahfouz's trilogy, *Qasr Al-Shawq* (The Palace of Yearning).

Although Barakat is a historical figure, the novel is not a historical one and its author is in no way linked to the tradition of the pioneer of the Arabic historical novel, Jirji Zaydan, as Edward Said suggests in his Foreword. Said is a brilliant critic in many respects, but he treads on thin ice when he ventures into the terrain of Arabic literature. He is at his most vulnerable when he passes general remarks about the development of the Arabic novel or when he describes Mahfouz's early work as social realist. But when it comes to textual analysis Said reveals his sensitivity and insight in equating the novel's structure with that of the world it aspires to reflect:

Just as the world of post revolutionary Egypt is a world dominated not only by American and Israeli power, but by 'the consciousness industry', by subtle techniques of surveillance and political intelligence, by overlapping brigades of state security forces, therefore Zayni's story is told by multiple narrators, each of whom complements and, to some extent, contradicts the others.

This homology or associative analogy, between the textual structure and the paradoxically realistic one gives the novel its wider relevance. It renders the easy association between Zayni's rule and that of 'the murky atmosphere of intrigue, conspiracy and

multiple schemes that characterized Abdel Nasser's rule during the 1960s' as a rather simplistic interpretation which reduces the novel to mere allegory and limits it to its political context. The novel was written after Nasser's death in the early days of Sadat's rule when he publicly pretended to dismantle the oppressive state security apparatus and sanctioned the orchestrated campaign against Nasser's era and its anti-democratic practices, only to start his own a few months later. It could be argued that Al-Ghitani has seized this convenient opportunity to exorcise from himself, through the rubrics of narrative, the hold of Nasser's powerful spirit. Yet, one of the major achievements of this novel is its unique ability to transcend its temporality and formulate a comprehensive statement on the human condition under various forms of despotism, when the only way out of the oppressive grip of one form is a way into that of another. *Zayni Barakat* creates a metaphor of the obsession and corruption of political power rather than a mimetic representation of reality in which history is used as a narrative device. It is a metaphor born out of a new aesthetics that distinguishes between experience and the literary representation of this experience. The multiplicity of narrators creates a type of polyphonic narrative in which the novelistic space becomes a battleground of opposing ideologies contending to invalidate one another. This polyphonic representation implies a clear rejection of the ideologically authoritative voice which long dominated both the narrative structure and the political arena; and at the same time posits the independence of characters and the separation of their voices from that of the author. The compositional nature of the novel which mixes monologues with quasi-documentary data may seem a conglomerate of disparate materials, but only in the light of the novel's unique fragmentary structure, in which highly heterogeneous and incompatible elements are dialectically fused together, can one grasp its organic cohesion.

These techniques enable the novel to touch upon some of the taboos of the Arab world: the monopoly of political power, the growth of corruption in the highest quarters, the ubiquity of secret intelligence, the pervasiveness of political intimidation and the swelling of detention camps. Without alienating the fictional world from the present reality under which he was writing, by placing it the Mamluk era, it would have been extremely difficult for Al-Ghitani to touch upon such issues and to shock the reader into a startled recognition of the present. The use of historical mask in *Zayni Barakat* is not synonymous with writing historical works that shed light on the present. For in this novel, as well as in many other similar works, Al-Ghitani did not write historical narrative in the strict sense of the term, and many of the speciously historical events, characters, or locations are more or less of his own invention. He only uses the mask of historicity to penetrate the present reality more effectively and to distance the situation from readers so that they can rethink it for themselves.

Al-Ghitani's use of language confirms this, for unlike the tradition of historical fiction in Egypt which is usually written in modern narrative language, *Zayni Barakat* borrows the archaic style, cadences and turns of phrase of the medieval historian, Ibn Iyās, to inhibit any identification with the situation, and more significantly to create a harmonious relationship between the disintegration of reality and that of the language. Indeed, the obsolete vocabulary, pallid syntactic structure and deceptively spontaneous casualness of this insightful chronologist acquire, in Al-Ghitani's novel, a new dimension, for its ostensible aridity constitutes a skillful irony with the situation which it tries to portray. This archaic language of narrative is in no way related to the decorative allegorism

of the rococo, for it is used as an 'authenticating device to create a chronicle of another era,' as Farouk Abdel Wahab, the able translator of the novel, suggests in his scholarly Translator's Note.

The literary work emerges— as Heidegger puts it—within the gap or rift between the meaningless materiality of the physical and the meaning endowed by history and the social. Al-Ghitani's writing is on the verge of exploring the impact of surrendering the self to the fascination of the absence of time. The 'I' in this writing is the 'I' of the present involved in the elaborate process of recognising itself as it sinks into the neutrality of a faceless historic 'he', which gives the narrative both its relevance and its obscurity. The absence of being sustains an illusion of being, or a redemption of its present condition through a dialectical process of linguistic interaction with historic discourse. This is so because implicit in the development of postmodern sensibility is the fact that language always betrays us, that language is so uncertain as a reflection of thought, experience or emotional life. To express this and at the same time counteract it, Al-Ghitani uses the language of historic discourse which has been manipulated by the chroniclers of the ruling establishment to express its opposing ideological standpoint.

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Child's-eye critique

Iran: a child's story, a man's experience

Gholam-Reza Sabri-Tabrizi

Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing. 1989. 304pp. £14.95hb

Sabri-Tabrizi's autobiographical account of life in Iran, from the 1930s to the revolution of 1979 and the early days of the Iran-Iraq war, is a social, cultural, and political history of his homeland, and a highly attractive work. The publishers have done a splendid and ambitious job with the text, its photographs, the illustrated cover and the endboards replete with poems.

Though written from an Azerbaijani perspective (Tabrizi grew up in Tabriz), this book provides a microcosm of life in Iran, first from a child's perspective, and then through the eyes of the exile. We discover the value of memories of home to those living in an alien society; Dr Tabrizi, now a lecturer in Persian at Edinburgh University, has been away from home for some twenty-five years. It is the story of a multi-cultural Iran, where the languages and cultures of the country's sizeable non-Persian minorities have been, and still are, largely ignored. The author describes a lost age through the experiences of his own Iranian Muslim family: ways of life that have almost disappeared; the traditional bathhouse, the *cheshma* (water well), the colourful bazaar life, the *chai-khanes* (teahouses), the caravanserais sheltering the camel trains stopping on the silk-road, the *maktah* (Quranic school), and the *doroshka* (two-horse carriage) rides. The book does not merely mirror the affairs of Tabriz's bazaar class, but also depicts the miserable life of the poor, the exploited child labour in his father's

carpet-factory, the cruel effects of class distinction on human relations, family members who become social outcasts after falling on hard times, the disdain of the urban dweller for his country cousin, the pitifully inadequate health services, illiteracy, and the power of religion—or its impotence. When taken as a child across Iran on a lengthy bus-ride to the shrine town of Mashhad, the author optimistically prays to the eighth Imam for a bike, but his prayers are ignored.

The writer sympathetically portrays the situation of women: the young fifteen- or sixteen-year-old brides sent to wait upon their in-laws, the problems of polygamy, the marriage brokers, the lack of medical services for mothers and children, and the plight of destitute widows. Like any family tale, there is tragedy, pathos and humour: some of his accounts are reminiscent of the comic tales of Nasr al-Din Khoja. As in the autobiographical *al-Ayyām* (The Days, 1929) of the Egyptian author, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, we are given a child's critique of the corrupt religious classes, in this case those rich *seyyids* and Mullahs, who abuse their position and their religion to plunder the poor and the ignorant. He depicts the unfortunate consequences of this group's historical alliance with the prosperous sections of the bazaar and the landowners, at times working with the Shah's Savak and the British government, and at other times against the Shahs and their Western backers. They were equally against constitutional reforms and the democratic governments of Pishavari and Mossadeq. Bringing us up to date, Tabrizi describes how, even under the Islamic Republic, the workers and peasants have again been left at the mercy of the factory owners and landowners, and the political parties have been systematically attacked and destroyed.

Tabriz is seen in its historical framework: the city of Zoroaster, conquered by Arabs, Mongols, Seljuks, Persians, Ottomans, and Russians, and more recently the town where the Bab was shot. The social and political history of Iran is cleverly interwoven into the narrative: there are tales of the pre-Islamic Mazdak, Iran's Wat Tyler; storytellers' accounts of Tabrizi's own childhood hero, the revolutionary shepherd, Babak Khurram-Din; and the author's own experiences in the revolution of 1979, giving us a street-level insight into how and why the revolution failed to meet the aspirations of many Iranians. Outside Iran, little is known in the popular imagination of the years before the First World War. Iranians, however, continue to derive inspiration from the ideals of that period and the 1905 Constitutional Revolution. Tabrizi portrays the populace's hatred of Reza Shah, the upstart from the district of 'dragons, demons and ogres', who seized the Iranian throne, and set back further democratic advances. The ideals of 1905 were restored briefly in the reign of democracy and reform from 1945–46 under the government of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan.

An ever-present theme is the Persian love of poetry, the author illustrating his text with his own apposite translations of all the leading Iranian poets, from Sadi, Rumi and Omar Khayyam to Ahmad Shamlu. Western analysts tend to ignore the role of poetry—still perhaps the region's most powerful art form—in the Middle Eastern psyche. Yet, for centuries, Iran's poets and writers, from Firdausi to the short story writer, Samad Behranghi (a friend of Tabrizi), have sympathised with the underdog and challenged the perfidious authorities, injustice, and excessive wealth; their words have often cost them their lives. One such poet was Mirzadeh Ishqī, who died in 1924 at the hands of Reza Shah for a poem criticising Reza's pro-British stance. Tabrizi reminds us of many of these writers, reiterating their message in their own words.

In giving us the minutiae of the Eastern family (rarely found in the run-of-the-mill

memoirs from the area, and usually only encountered in Middle Eastern fiction), Dr Tabrizi could be describing family and bazaar life anywhere from Fez to Tashkent. Both the general reader and the specialist will gain much from the rich kaleidoscope of this child's world, with its simplicity, naivety, and humanity, as it takes us out of the twisting alleys, behind closed doors and high walls, through the beautiful tranquil gardens with their pools, into the home of the Iranian family. This a moving homage to Tabriz, Iran, and its fearless champions of freedom.

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A number of important special issues published in recent years are still available: *Golden-Age Studies in Honour of A.A. Parker*, edited by Melveena McKendrick (July 1984); *Medieval Studies* (January 1985); *Nineteenth-Century Hispanic Fiction* (January 1986); *Golden-Age Drama* (January 1987); *Luso-Brazilian Studies* (January 1988); *Spanish-American Fiction* (January 1989). Also in 1988 the journal began its new Textual Research and Criticism series with an edition by J.M. Ruano de la Haza of Calderon's *El Purgatorio de San Patricio*. The *BHS* is edited in the University of Liverpool by Professor Dorothy Sherman Severin and Miss Ann L. Mackenzie. Full details, and sample copies, of the journal are available from the publisher.

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Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America. 1986. 450pp.

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Following the appalling ethnic violence of 1983, Sri Lanka has attracted international attention as a hitherto peaceful island-democracy rent by communal strife and secessionism. Events since then have further compounded Sri Lanka's problems. The intransigence of the main protagonists—the Sinhalese-dominated government in the south, committed to preserving the status quo, and the principal militant Tamil group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north and east, bent on secession—coupled with the geopolitical imperatives of India's position, ensured that the ensuing political and military impasse could be broken only by direct Indian intervention. Neither side in Sri

Lanka could achieve its ultimate objectives on its own, or summon sufficient will to hammer out a compromise which did not require the assistance of an external power to conceive, implement and guarantee. Preceded by a series of abortive negotiations, atrocities and bloody, yet inconclusive, military operations, the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord signed in July 1987 was a compromise agreement between the two governments, which substituted provincial autonomy for secession. It also facilitated the introduction of Indian troops into the Tamil areas of the island in a peace-keeping capacity and, in the letters accompanying the accord, gave India a virtual veto over Sri Lanka's foreign policy orientation.

Far from being a panacea, the accord has added a twist to what is an already turbulent and tortuous nation-building process in Sri Lanka, by arousing widespread anti-Indian sentiment amongst both the Sinhalese and Tamils. It has launched New Delhi on a collision course with both the newly elected government of President Premadasa, and the LTTE. As the Indians entered into the accord on behalf of the Tamils, but without having a definite mandate from them or unequivocal assurance of their acceptance of it, India has had to launch costly military campaigns against the LTTE in defence of the accord. In the south, President Premadasa is currently besieged by the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), an ostensibly Marxist party that has capitalised on the accord to champion the cause of Sinhalese chauvinism. To demonstrate his nationalist credentials, Premadasa has demanded that Indian troops leave the island by July 1989 and has secured a cease-fire agreement from the LTTE. Neither New Delhi or the JVP has been impressed. The Indian government has flatly refused to comply, whilst the JVP has stepped up its campaign of political assassination against members of the ruling party, and has paralysed public transport through a highly effective strike-call buttressed by fear and intimidation. In response, the president has reimposed the emergency he so optimistically lifted on election.

The Indian presence has strengthened each community's notion of sectarian nationalism and has, ironically, allowed for a consensus between them on the need to expel the peace-keeping force. Yet, this consensus is extremely limited, and does not extend to the central question of the future of Sri Lanka and its Tamil minority. Consequently, Sri Lanka, once hailed as the exemplar of liberal democracy in the developing world, has become the test case for Indian regional pretensions and is fast degenerating into the Lebanon of South Asia.

The six books under review are entirely or in large part devoted to the evolution of this ethnic conflict. The authors are Sri Lankan—both Sinhalese and Tamils—and have had direct experience of, and close association with, their subject. Even C R de Silva's *Sri Lanka: a history* and the first volume of K M de Silva's and Howard Wiggins' biography, *J R Jayewardene of Sri Lanka*, can be read as setting the historical context of the conflict. The impression conveyed by the Tamil authors is that the preservation of the unitary

status of Sri Lanka is no longer possible if the discrimination, insensitivity and atrocities to which their community has been subjected by the Sinhalese, are to be reversed. This view may seem invidious and counter to the spirit of ethnic harmony, but it underscores the perception of deep grievance felt by the Tamils. Indeed, all the volumes catalogue the various pieces of legislation enacted by the Sinhalese regarding the franchise, language and education, designed to consolidate state power at the expense of the minorities, as well as frustration of the numerous attempts to secure limited accommodation of ethnic grievance within the framework of a unitary constitution.

Professor C R de Silva's *Sri Lanka: a history* is a scholarly survey by an eminent Sri Lankan historian, covering socio-economic and political developments, and anthropological and cultural factors. He is aware of the problem of subjectivity that besets social scientists and historians, and of its pertinence to the current discourse on Sri Lanka. He defines his task accordingly as being to create a 'balanced and comprehensive understanding of the past' (p 1). In a succinct introduction, Professor de Silva outlines the salient features of his analysis. The impressive hydraulic civilisation of ancient Sri Lanka, the institutional and economic legacy of British colonialism, the social welfare commitment of successive Sri Lankan governments and the erosion of democracy are scrupulously documented. The present Indian role in the Sri Lankan balance of power is shown to have historical parallels, and the overall Indian influence on society is characterised as distinctive but not exclusive.

Having no partisan position to advocate, ethnic grievance to air or political conversion to elucidate, Professor de Silva succeeds in presenting an impartial synthesis. The only problem is that he errs on the side of caution, especially in chapter 17, where, a more trenchant critique of the links between creeping authoritarianism, economic development and ethnic dissonance would have enhanced the significance of this book as a contribution to the understanding of the factors conducive to democracy in the Third World. This criticism aside, *Sri Lanka: a history* can be read as a valuable introduction to the current predicament of Sri Lanka, and as a lucid account of the nation- and state-building process in the developing world.

Somasundaram Vanniasingham's *Sri Lanka: the conflict within* and Chelavadurai Manogaran's *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, catalogue the history of Tamil grievance. The former, written after the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, is firmly committed to a separate state of Eelam for the Tamils, whilst the latter, written just before the accord, concludes that ethnic reconciliation is only possible if the Tamils are accorded the degree of provincial autonomy which was eventually incorporated in the accord.

Vanniasingham, a former honorary secretary of the All-Island Government Clerical Service Union of Sri Lanka, and a victim of the Sinhala-Only Act of 1956 on the official language, is a committed separatist, and this fact gives his book a pungent nationalist flavour. He is scathing about both the Indian and

Sri Lankan governments. What is of interest is that he is avowedly anti-Marxist, Gandhian and constitutionalist in his approach to *swaraj* for the Tamils, and has attempted to impress these views upon, one suspects, a not too receptive LTTE leadership. Examples of his anti-Marxism are to be found in chapter 6, which is entitled 'The Marxist contribution to the travails of the Tamils'. With some justification, Vanniasingham outlines how the Marxist parties deliberately manipulated the plight of the Indian Tamil plantation workers for partisan advantage, and how the allure of state power led them to jettison their commitment to a secular multi-ethnic society. He is likewise critical of the Tamil leadership in the plantations for its susceptibility to manipulation, and warns that 'some Marxists have penetrated into the militant movements and function as advisers. Their influence is only skin-deep but this is more than enough to ruin the Tamils' (p 154). New Delhi's Sri Lanka policy is similarly seen as being determined by Moscow rather than some inexorable geopolitical logic (pp 123-4). His final chapter is entitled 'The constitution of Eeylom' (sic). In it, Vanniasingham offers his blueprint for a just society founded on a combination of a US-style separation of powers and the best traditions of an impartial bureaucracy. His book is an explicit political tract outlining various strategies to expedite Eelam and is imbued with the dominant political ideas of subcontinental politics in the 1940s. Whilst his fidelity to Eelam cannot be doubted, the adoption of his constitutionalist strategies to achieve it, seems doubtful in the light of recent events.

Manogaran's volume is devoid of Vanniasingham's passionate advocacy and relies mainly on statistical data to substantiate the argument that long-standing Sinhalese grievances relating to language, religion, education and employment *vis-à-vis* the Tamils have long been rectified. Consequently, he avers that the continued discrimination against the Tamils is unjustified and that it is Tamil rights that are seriously in need of protection. A special feature of Manogaran's book is that he brings his expertise as a geographer to the analysis of irrigation and colonisation schemes in Sri Lanka, thereby illustrating the multi-dimensional nature of nation-building. He covers the familiar ground of the discriminatory legislation concerning the franchise, language and employment opportunities, and charts the course of Tamil political development from accommodation to federalism and outright secessionism. He succeeds in showing how attempts to mitigate conflict in the face of mounting ethnic tension have been undermined by the invariable intrusion of narrow political populism, as illustrated by the 1957 Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact. Although his underlying theme suggests that too little, if at all, has been done too late to nurture ethnic reconciliation, Manogaran holds out hope for a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka that is federal in all but name. He looks to India as the agent with sufficient leverage to effect this harmony. As noted above, however, post accord developments indicate otherwise.

Professor A Jeyaratnam Wilson's *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: the Sinhalese-*

Tamil conflict is a major contribution to the literature on the conflict for a variety of reasons. The author, a Sri Lankan Tamil, held the founding chair of Political Science at the University of Ceylon and since 1972 has occupied the same position at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. He has acted as an unofficial constitutional adviser to the president of Sri Lanka (1979-83), was an intermediary between the president and the principal Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and in 1979-80 was a vice-chairperson of the Presidential Commission on Development Councils. Professor Wilson has written extensively on the political and constitutional developments in Sri Lanka and is the son-in-law of the Tamil federalist leader, the late S J V Chelvanayagam. The product of considerable professional expertise, as well as personal experience and connections, this book is an invaluable primary and secondary source on the subject.

In the preface, Professor Wilson forcefully states his thesis. He contends that since Sinhalese elites have been unwilling to share power with the Tamil minority, 'Ceylon has already split into two entities. At present this is a state of mind; for it to become a territorial reality is a question of time.' His is therefore an insider's account, an 'interpretive analysis' of how the Sinhalese obsession with their 'land, race and faith' has made Tamil Eelam inevitable. Professor Wilson is adamant about this inevitability, and concludes in his epilogue that even in the wake of the accord, 'what I have said in the foregoing text on the question of two states—especially in terms of *historical* time—remains valid' (emphasis in the original, p 229).

The sense of disillusionment and despair that pervades the analysis, especially in the sections directly concerning the author's own efforts at reconciliation (pp 140-74), does not detract from the central argument that nation-building in Sri Lanka has been distorted by the drive for Sinhalese hegemony. Professor Wilson investigates the mischievous trinity of Sinhalese chauvinism—the land, the race and the faith—along with the colonial legacy of a centralised unitary state, and cogently demonstrates how the myths of the former, wedded to the opportunities and institutions of the latter, have bedevilled ethnic harmony. His close personal relationship with Chelvanayagam provides him with unique insight into the politics of the period 1931-72, when the ethnic issue was expressed predominantly through the medium of parliamentary politics. Consequently, his treatment of the politics of the Donoughmore Constitution which ushered in the universal franchise (1931), the disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamil plantation workers (1948-9) and the formation of the Federal Party (1949), the turbulent 1950s which saw the Sinhala-Only official language legislation (1956), the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact (1957) and the communal riots of 1958, is rich in analysis and illuminating personal observation. This is sustained in the appraisal of the events of the following three decades. The assessment of the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions, in terms of their corrosive effect on liberal democracy and the exacerbation of ethnic dissonance, is especially instructive.

In chapter 7 on India's role, Professor Wilson covers the various Indian mediation efforts that preceded the accord. He accurately points out, with reference to his own contacts with Indian policy-makers, that new Delhi's overarching objective in Sri Lanka is strategic denial *vis-à-vis* other powers and the preservation of its position as the preeminent regional power in the sub-continent. Indispensable to this aim, of course, is that its foreign policy should not jeopardise the multi-ethnic, secular nature of the Indian polity. Therefore, having made the commitment symbolised in the accord, India cannot allow secession to succeed in Sri Lanka without suffering a diminution of its prestige, and if Professor Wilson is correct about Eelam, it would seem that India and the LTTE are locked in a conflict to realise their opposing destinies. This certainly seems to be the case at present with respect to Sinhalese nationalism as well.

Volume One, covering the period 1906-56, of K M de Silva's and Howard Wiggins' political biography of the first Finance Minister and executive president of Sri Lanka, J R Jayewardene—written by de Silva—is a doubly welcome addition to the literature: few political biographies of Sri Lankan leaders exist which can match the scope of this enterprise, and its subject is not only one of the most important actors in modern Sri Lankan history but also one of the most complex personalities of its contemporary politics.

Professor de Silva is a distinguished Sri Lankan historian who has known his subject for over two decades. This may have been incidental if the volume, though excellently researched with access to Jayewardene's unpublished diaries and memoirs, did not convey the impression of excessive admiration for its subject and a tendency to *explain* rather than *analyse* motive. An example of this tendency is his treatment of an issue of paramount importance in later years, the June 1943 resolution introduced in the State Council by Jayewardene with the aim of making Sinhala the official language (pp 155-60). With Jayewardene's consent, the motion was amended to include Tamil and ultimately passed in that form. Professor de Silva dismisses the exclusion of Tamil from Jayewardene's original resolution as a 'tactical blunder'. This may well have been so, even in the case of someone who has been hailed as *the* consummate strategist and tactician of Sri Lankan politics—an opinion which, on the evidence of this volume, the author seems to subscribe to as well—but it is juxtaposed somewhat uncomfortably with the extract from *Hansard* of Jayewardene's explanation for the omission (p 157). Professor de Silva's comment on this extract is that 'it was an argument that one was to hear with much greater frequency if not greater conviction ten years later by those who agitated for Sinhala as the sole national language'. It will be interesting to read Volume Two for an analysis of the subject's politics in this later period, since the speech can legitimately be interpreted as being consistent with Professor Wilson's demonology of 'the land, the race, the faith'. This volume ends with the United National Party's (UNP) crushing defeat at the polls, despite its

dramatic change of policy to exploit the populist surge, in an election dominated by the assertion of linguistic nationalism. In a footnote, Professor de Silva refers the reader to J L Fernando's *Three Prime Ministers of Ceylon* for an account of Jayewardene's role in these developments (p 3202). His failure to provide his own assessment in a political biography of such magnitude, seems less than satisfactory.

This criticism apart, Professor de Silva provides a rich account of Sinhalese elite life in his early chapters, and offers intriguing insights into the Jayewardene-Senanayake relationship which loyalists of the latter may take issue with, thus making the case for a similar study of Dudley Senanayake more compelling. This will also facilitate more informed appraisals of the internal politics of UNP and the machinations of elite politics. The book gives a full account of Jayewardene's triumph at the San Francisco conference (1951), his role in the Colombo Plan (1950-51) and his sentimental Indophilia. Jayewardene's stewardship at the Ministry of Finance is also well documented, though here again, the earlier criticisms pertain to the treatment of Jayewardene's role in the reduction of the food subsidies which led to the eventual collapse of Dudley Senanayake's first government (1953).

Professor de Silva succeeds in painting a perceptive portrait of his subject as a shrewd political operator with a keen awareness of the organisational requirements of his craft that is yet to be surpassed in Sri Lankan politics. He also captures some of the complexity of his subject's introvert personality, which Professor Wilson also remarks upon in his book. Jayewardene's place in the annals of the Sri Lankan history is assured: one eagerly awaits Volume Two for a comprehensive appreciation of this fact.

Professor de Silva's *Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka 1880-1985*, is a cogent account of ethnic conflict in the context of nation- and state-building, written from a perspective that is at variance with those of other authors in this review. It can be interpreted at one level as a highly sophisticated exposition of the Sinhalese perspective in the conflict that admits error but eschews responsibility, and at another, as an equally sophisticated and cogent defence of Sri Lanka's record. Professor de Silva's conclusion (pp 361-77) is especially relevant in this respect, as it comprises a concise synthesis of his preceding analysis. A brief outline of his argument should show why the book is indispensable to an understanding of the ethnic conflict, as well as conveying the reviewer's impression of this line of reasoning.

In his opening paragraph, Professor de Silva claims that 'despite flawed policies and short-sighted decisions there is a creditable record of innovative and imaginative attempts to accommodate the minorities, and just as important, assimilation was never regarded as a practical policy option in determining relations between the Sinhalese-Buddhists and the minorities'. Most of the Tamil fears and sense of insecurity stem from the knowledge that they would

lose, if they have not already lost, the advantageous position they once enjoyed or presently enjoy in many areas of public life in the country, in brief a classic case of a sense of relative deprivation spurring a people on to a dogged resistance to policies of and proposals for change' (p 363). The conflict, according to him 'is between a majority with a minority complex, and a minority with a yearning for majority status, a minority with a majority complex' (p 368). Finally, Professor de Silva places his faith in the capacity of the Sri Lankan political system and the 'pragmatic strand' in Sri Lankan politics to 'adjust, to compromise, to accommodate . . .' Can it, will it, do so, without destroying itself?

The resilience of South Asian states to which Professor de Silva alludes suggests that 'destruction' may be too dramatic a prognosis for the future, as it was in the case of Pakistan a decade-and-a-half ago. A transformation of the Sri Lankan polity seems assured as the elite consensus that underpinned the transfer of power in 1948 is exhausted, and a delayed exercise in nation-building proceeds inexorably to a climax. The central issue that has to be confronted during that process, judiciously, yet generously, is that of self-definition and identity; the 'land' can be retained only if it is not the monopoly of one 'race' or one 'faith'.

Cultural resistance: the survival of peoples

Clive Christie

Indigenous Populations, Ethnic Minorities and Human Rights

Wolfgang S Heinz

Berlin: Quorum Verlag. 1988. 224pp. n/p.

Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States

Edited by Gerard Chaliand

London: Pluto Press. 1989. 160pp. £18.00hb/£7.95pb

Ethnicities and Nations: processes of interethnic relations in Latin America, South-east Asia, and the Pacific

Edited by Remo Guidieri, Francesco Pellizzi and Stanley J Tambiah

Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. 1988. 384pp. \$22.50hb

Report from the Frontier: the state of the world's indigenous peoples

Julian Burger

London: Zed Books. 1987. 310pp. £28.95hb/£8.95pb

The Indigenous Voice: visions and realities, volumes 1 and 2

Edited by Roger Moody

London: Zed Books. 1988. Volume 1: 444pp. £35.95hb/£13.95pb

Volume 2: 317pp. £32.95hb/£10.95pb

The five works under review are all concerned with the problem of ethnic minorities and their fate in the modern world, but they can be divided into two groupings: those that focus on ethnic minority problems in general, and those that concern themselves specifically with *indigenous* minorities. Although there is an obvious overlap, this distinction is important, and will be maintained in the review.

I

Wolfgang S Heinz's *Indigenous Populations, Ethnic Minorities and Human Rights*, gives an extremely useful survey of ethnic minority problems as a whole. He elaborates the essential differences between indigenous and territorial minorities on one side, and ethnic minorities that are immigrant and normally non-territorial in character on the other. This distinction is not only important for an understanding of the self-identity of ethnic minorities (an American Indian's sense of identity, for example, is likely to be very different from that of a Chinese-American's), but also for a definition of minority rights. Heinz then goes on to examine the history of the development of the concept of minority rights, both in bilateral and multilateral international agreements. Among the interesting points that he makes here are that minority rights in Europe were initially defined as the protection of religious minorities; that the post-1919 settlement created an international framework for the protection of minority rights that was commendable in its conception, but was in practice partial and liable to exacerbate ethnic tensions in the newly-formed states of Europe; and that the post-1945 international agreements for the protection of minorities have tended to promote the right of minorities to assimilate and integrate at the expense of cultural diversity and political self-determination.

The remainder of the book outlines the nature of the pressures that, despite this battery of international and national guarantees, still threaten the survival of ethnic, and particularly indigenous, minorities throughout the world. These pressures normally boil down to the relentless demand for modernisation and development—an unholy alliance of interest between international business and national elites—and concern for national security and integration. Heinz gives an excellent case-study of how these pressures are exerted, by describing Kalingan and Bontoc resistance in the Philippines to a grandiose dam project that would have swallowed up their land, and thereby destroyed their cultural identity. The book concludes with a précis of

the aims of principal international organisations designed to defend minority and indigenous rights. In general, this book is painstaking, well-organised and judicious in approach.

Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States, edited by Gerard Chaliand, and sponsored by the Minority Rights Group, London, is a collection of articles covering both general and specific aspects of ethnic minority problems and their historical background. The first two articles, by Gerard Chaliand and Alain Fenet respectively, both emphasise the point that the very structuring of post-1945 international relations has adversely affected the status of minorities within states. In the first place, 'national liberation' has since 1945 been defined as the liberation of *existing* states under colonial control, and therefore has commensurately denied the national and political rights of minorities within those states. Following from this, international and regional organisations (such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)) have tended almost invariably to protect existing states from separatist pressures and demands for effective political rights on the part of ethnic minorities. In parenthesis, is it too much to hope that the European Community will become the first supra-national organisation to promote systematically the political as well as the cultural rights of territorial minorities?

The middle section of the book contains articles on minority problems in the Islamic world (Maxime Rodinson), China (François Thierry) and the USSR (René Tangac). A striking aspect of Rodinson's analysis is his demonstration that ethnic assertions, which were not significant in the political organisation of the pre-colonial era of Islam (except in some very specialised cases), have come to dominate the Islamic world in the nationalist era. In a few cases this has created a confusion between national and Islamic identity (Egypt and the Copts); in others it has resulted in the assertion of an ethnic identity at the expense of Islamic unity (Algeria and the Berbers; Turkey and the Kurds). The articles on China and Russia show that, while in Russia there has been a genuine tension between a respect for ethnic rights, the imperative for 'progressive' political and economic development and the historic tendencies of centralised control, in China the pressures for assimilation and centralised control have since 1949 been overwhelmingly dominant. The final articles in the book consider the general phenomena of diaspora (Richard Marienstrab) and genocide (Yves Ternon). In his chapter on 'the notion of diaspora', Marienstrab makes an interesting distinction between the Jewish *Bund*, which asserted that a national identity could thrive in conditions of diaspora—that is, without a territorial base—and Zionism, which insisted on the prerequisite of a territorial base.

Ethnicities and Nations, edited by Remo Guidieri, Francesco Pellizzi and Stanley Tambiah, also contains a series of articles assessing the minority problem in general, alongside specific examples ranging from South America to South and Southeast Asia. Where this book differs from Chaliand's is that a

few of the contributors have chosen to approach the minority problem from a highly abstract and theoretical perspective. The result is wholly unfortunate: a tortured, oppressive, constipated prose that makes Hegel's seem pellucid by comparison. Any useful observations that might have been made are completely lost in the thickets of social science jargon.

The remaining articles are, however, well worth reading. Shelton Davis on the relationship between Indian and Ladino in Guatemalan and Salvadorean politics makes the important point that the destruction of Indian land rights had its origin in the late nineteenth-century convergence of the liberal ideology of progress and political integration on the one side, and the economic pressure for plantation development on the other. Conversely, the dogged retention of Indian identity did not seriously worry the national elite till the Indian demand for land restoration converged with communist agitation in the 1930s and with the Cuba-inspired guerrilla movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Theodore MacDonald's excellent article on the Miskito Indians shows all too clearly, however, that the fetishes of economic development and national integration have infected the Latin American left quite as much as the traditional governing elite. His record of the Sandinistas' relationship with the Miskito Indians makes thoroughly depressing reading. It could be noted in passing that the Sandinista's enthusiastic endorsement of the Argentine Junta's occupation of the Falklands/Malvinas illustrates the same inability to understand the deep-rooted nature of Ladino imperialism.

The articles on the ethnic problems of Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines are commendably clear and informative. It is interesting to note that Cornelia Ann Kammerer, in her article on the Akha of Thailand, emphasises a point that also lies at the heart of Shelton Davis' and Theodore MacDonald's theses on the Central American Indians; namely, that land is the absolute key to the preservation of the identity of indigenous ethnic groups. The same could be said of the Welsh-language culture of northern and central Wales.

Mention should finally be made of Serge Thion's article on 'manipulation of identities towards and beyond the nation', with particular reference to the examples of China, Indo-China and Thailand. In trying to encapsulate the main points of an essay so rich in ideas and examples, there is a danger of over-simplification. Among other things, he notes the extraordinary coexistence, particularly in areas of ethnic complexity such as the region encompassing South-West China, northern Indo-China and northern Thailand, of tenacious cultural particularism at the local level, and the adaptability of the created identities at the national level; the interaction, as he puts it, of 'the malleable and the infrangible'. He suggests that the Asian national revolutions of the twentieth century, far from being assertions of diversity, are agents of a generalised push for development, uniformity and power under the guise of diversity. Modern forms of nationalism have, therefore, offered no resistance to the all-

pervading cosmopolitan culture, so attractive to the urban middle class and youth of modern Asia, that can be summed up in the formula, 'America made in Japan'. Only the staying-power of local particularisms, sustained above all things by language, can resist this cosmopolitan culture that is the true destroyer of diversity in the modern world.

II

'Every encounter with "civilized" people was a sad one. I don't want to think about it.' So writes a member of the Ache tribe of Paraguay, whose memoir is one of the many writings of indigenous peoples included in Roger Moody's two-volumed *The Indigenous Voice*. In many ways, this quotation encapsulates the sense of helplessness that envelops one when reading of the fate of indigenous minorities in the modern world. Faced by the relentless forces of transnational capitalism—a force that will 'always cheat and always win'—by the combined forces of national development and the 'revolution of production' and, most particularly, by the modern mass consumer and his demand for convenience at all costs, it is hard to see how even the most remote pockets of indigenous resistance can ultimately survive.

Julian Burger's *Report From the Frontier* concentrates on indigenous ethnic minorities, that is, minorities that are territorially-based, and culturally separate from the identity of the national mainstream. The first part of the book concerns the general plight of indigenous peoples throughout the world. Their major threat—apart from the general pressures mentioned above—is the prevailing notion, particularly among Third World governments, that their 'backwardness' must be remedied. Thus they are forced—for ideological reasons in addition to motives of sheer greed—into the national, and thence the world economy, but always in an inherently disadvantageous and peripheral relationship. Addressing the question of indigenous resistance to these pressures, Burger makes the important observation that indigenous minorities are becoming increasingly aware that Marxist programmes—peddled by national liberation movements and communist regimes—are ultimately as dangerous as capitalist 'solutions'; indeed, their general trends are indistinguishable.

Burger then examines the problems facing indigenous minorities in Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Western world, the Pacific and the communist world respectively. Concerning Latin America, he directs particular attention to the way in which international indebtedness and land-hunger—phenomena that are to some extent interrelated—have caused the recent major pressures on indigenous land-holdings; he also shows that the rhetoric of indigenous protection, particularly in Brazil, has had absolutely no foundation in reality. In Asia, the same pressures prevail, in addition to the state of semi-permanent war that exists in such countries as Burma. Bangladesh, however, presents the most spectacular case of shameless and deliberate repression and eviction of indigenous (and non-Muslim) minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; a re-

pression, incidentally, that has evoked an equally savage response. Regarding Africa he gives special attention to the nomads of the northern sector of the Sahel, victims of the permanent boundaries of the new nation-states, and of the perennial mistrust of these new states for unregulated trans-border movement. For the Pacific region, strategic considerations—a reflection of the increasing militarisation of the region—are shown to be the main threat to indigenous ways of life.

Burger concludes with a roll-call of the major international companies and organisations that have played such a large part in threatening the position of indigenous peoples. Extractive industries, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are prominent, but British corporations such as Rio Tinto, BP, Shell, ICI, Massey Ferguson, in addition to the Commonwealth Development Corporation, have all made their contribution.

At the beginning of his collection of writings by indigenous peoples, Roger Moody expresses the fear that the two volumes may be criticised by academics for 'inaccuracy, repetitiveness and, worst of all, a lack of objectivity'. It is, in fact, an extremely well-organised collection, divided into coherent chapters with useful introductions for each sub-section. A point made repeatedly in the collection is the inherent disadvantage faced by indigenous groups because of their conditional, rather than absolute, title to land: both in the capitalist world because of the imposition of a concept of private property, and in the socialist world because of the prior claims of 'the nation'. This has, paradoxically, meant that indigenous people cannot, on principle, make concessions on land that would lead to a further weakening of their already tenuous hold on their land. If they had a more secure title, there would be more room for sensible and mutually beneficial bargaining over land use. Another general feature of this collection is the sense it conveys of the sheer relentlessness of the pressure that transnational corporations and governments exert in order to gain land concessions from indigenous peoples. A battering-ram of legal, publicity and lobbying devices is deployed against people who, on the whole, lack the resources of experience, education and time that would enable them to defend their position year after year. In this context, the Mohawk Jerry Gambill's satiric article, 'Twenty-One Ways to Scalp an Indian', published in *Akwesasne Notes*, stands out as a key, encapsulating document. It is also worth noting here the malign role played by missionary organisations such as the *Summer Institute of Linguistics* (of Wycliffe Bible Translators) and *New Tribes Mission* in the continued oppression and dispossession of indigenous peoples.

Roger Moody does not flinch, however, from addressing the very real internal difficulties that indigenous movements face. There are, first of all, the inevitable divisions among groups faced with external pressures; internal dissent and differences of opinion, a normal condition of open societies, may have fatal consequences for fragile indigenous societies. There is also the problem of the internal nature of the cultures that are being defended, which may

render them vulnerable to outside criticism; for example, in their treatment of women. Above all, indigenous movements have to face the criticism that, in 'roping off' their culture and their land, and in asserting even modified forms of rights to self-government, they are endorsing what amounts to an 'apartheid' approach. This is not a problem for indigenous groups in the Third World alone: Welsh protesters who have attempted to defend their culture and their language from unrestricted immigration have faced similar taunts of racism and apartheid.

In my opinion, one of the major obstacles for indigenous movements—and minority movements in general—has not been adequately addressed in the books reviewed above. This is the link that has developed, particularly since the 1960s and 1970s, between movements for minority rights, and Marxism-Leninism and the left in general. In other words, minority movements have tended to absorb the rhetoric and idiom of Marxism-Leninism. This has ignored the fact that the relationship between minority movements and the left is an extremely uneasy one at the best of times. It has also helped to create quite unnecessary splits within minority movements, and it has, of course, made it easier for national governments to justify and intensify repression using outside aid. The attempt of certain minority movements to find an ideological position on the left-right political spectrum has proved to be extremely damaging and misleading. After all, one could argue that there is a natural affinity between minority/indigenous movements and traditional conservatism—though certainly not the modern business-orientated conservatism of Reagan and Thatcher. Samuel Johnson, for example, clearly stated his sense of outrage at the treatment of the Gaelic Scots who were being steadily uprooted from their land at the end of the eighteenth century, and had an uncontrollable (and, to his friends, baffling) hatred for the American settlers. Edmund Burke was concerned to protect Indians against the depredations of British plunderers in Bengal, and the relationship between colonialism and traditional conservatism was always ambiguous. In our own time, we find from Peter Simple's memoirs that he was in his early days greatly attracted to Celtic nationalism in general, and Saunder Lewis' brand of Welsh nationalism in particular. In other words, it would be fatal if the defence of indigenous peoples' rights should come to be seen as a purely 'progressive' cause.

The state in Zaire

Jacques Depelchin

The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire

Michael Schatzberg

Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. 1988. 193pp. £25.00hb

Entrepreneurs and Parasites: the struggle for indigenous capitalism in Zaire

Janet MacGaffey

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 241pp. £27.50hb

The central concern of the books under review is the state. This is so only because one expects the state to dominate formally all aspects of life in Zaire. However, this formal domination hides a reality which, in different ways, is the principal interest of Janet MacGaffey and Michael Schatzberg. Both books are the product of extensive empirical research, and are partly based on essays which have already appeared in various journals. By far their greatest value lies in the amount of information they offer. Unfortunately, the empirical information is not quite matched by their attempts to articulate a theoretical understanding of the historical processes they are studying. This criticism could be addressed to almost all scholars, including this one, who have attempted to sift through the empirical evidence in order to arrive at a coherent theoretical explanation of the Zairian state.

The single most important weakness of both authors, and one which predominates in all studies of the state in Africa, is the inability (or is it reluctance?) to problematise the post-colonial state beyond the traditional chronological schemas of colonial and post-colonial periods. In the most extreme cases this kind of simplistic periodisation leads to the over-simplistic assumption that the colonial state does not need to be problematised since we all know already what it is. In other words history is looked upon as a sort of assembly plant where all that is needed is to assemble the pieces without pre-occupying oneself with where they came from or how they were manufactured.

It is not sufficient to point out, as Schatzberg does, that 'Most contemporary African states are lineal descendants of the colonial conquest states imposed during colonial rule' (p 19). It is not enough because beyond the similarities lie specific differences, and these differences cannot be reduced to that between an instrument for maintaining law and order, on the one hand, and an instrument for development, on the other. This is an odd characterisation coming from someone whose stated objective is to move away from functionalist interpreta-

tions of the state. The more so since he goes on to assert that, because of the function of the state under colonial rule, after that rule ended, 'the only avenue open to Africans wishing to accumulate wealth and better their positions in life was through advancement in the state structure' (p 19). A minor criticism here: there is a difference between those who are out to accumulate wealth and those who are trying to better their lives. However, over time, as Schatzberg points out, occupying a position within the state bureaucracy, was no longer the *sine qua non* of accumulation of wealth (a view around which Janet MacGaffey articulated her own *Entrepreneurs and Parasites* and with which this reviewer agrees, at least at the descriptive level).

My main disagreement with Schatzberg's approach does not stem so much from his attempt to provide an alternative to Marxist, neo-Marxist or functionalist analyses, as from the resulting erasure of significant aspects of Zairian history which, one would have thought, were pertinent to the whole work. Thus, the single-minded focus on 'internal pockets of resistance' means that, although external interventions are mentioned, they are not considered crucial in moulding the Zairian state into its present form. The African states were not only objects for struggles among the competing factions of the emerging bourgeoisies, but they were also targeted by the former colonial metropolises to ensure that the pre-existing relationships were not altered. For example, the attempts to eliminate Patrice Lumumba politically were started even before the Congo became independent, and from his physical elimination to the rise to power of Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko), first in September 1960 and later in November 1965, the state in the Congo was the focus of intense struggles both from outside and from within. But, from Schatzberg's perspective, it is as if, with the end of colonial rule, colonialism and its twin brother, imperialism, completely disappeared from the scene. Or are we to assume that, in the—unstated—name of *perestroika*, one should ban the use of certain concepts (such as neo-colonialism and imperialism) because a certain intellectual fashion dictates that they belong to another ideological age? Unfortunately, in the case of Zaire, the author of the *Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* like others before him, has jettisoned more than what some may find an anachronistic and therefore useless term. The post-colonial state in Zaire was not *always* a lineal descendant of the colonial state. Attempts were made to transform that state. From Lumumba's Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) to Kabila's RPP and through the insurrection in the Kwilu led by Pierre Mulele, one finds movements aimed at a radical transformation of Congolese society. Whatever individual authors may think of these efforts, they did take place, and they did so as a result of analyses of Congolese society by Congolese actively involved in the process of that transformation, and not by outsiders looking on from the safe distance of an academic chair.

By erasing Mulele from the historical record, whether he realises it or not,

Schatzberg has done exactly what Mobutu's apologists have always called for: buried, without a tombstone, the period from 1960 to 1965. In the histories of Zaire produced by the regime, the 1960-65 period usually comes under the heading of 'chaos'. Such is the power of propaganda that it has led an author who is, by his own account, uncompromisingly critical of the current regime to reproduce Mobutu's framework for looking at Zaire's post-colonial history. The flaw is the more serious when the reader notices that there are in the text two references to the PRP, one of the outgrowth of the 1960-67 peasant insurrections which included the one led by Mulele in the Kwilu region, but the references will leave the uninformed reader confused as to what the history of the PRP is. In one reference (p 58) it appears as a revolutionary group, and in the other (p 60) as a movement interested in the maintenance of the banditry which benefits both the army and the PRP. What should one conclude from these two passing references to a party which, at one point, was considered the most serious political opposition group in Zaire? Since no conclusions are expressed or even hinted at, one must assume that the failure to discuss a movement such as Mulele's, which was once referred to by the participants as 'The Second Independence', stems from a conceptual framework of the state which, by definition, excludes autonomous attempts at self-definition. This cannot but make one wonder whether the earlier academic practice of erasing African history and proclaiming its non-existence, has not survived under a different guise.

The erasure of Mulele from the discussion is even more difficult to understand in view of the mention in the bibliography of Benoit Verhaegen's two-volume study of the Congolese insurrections. Whether in historical, political or ideological terms, the movement led by Mulele was far more important than some of the other events mentioned in the text, such as Shaba I and Shaba II. The major failure of *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* is to have accepted the problematisation of the state of the regime as the only one worth discussing. The failure is major because other alternatives are discussed except the most significant: that attempted by Mulele. If Mulele's attempt had been seriously discussed, it would have forced the author to revise completely his model of a dialectic of oppression in which the so-called ordinary folks of towns and villages are merely seen as passive actors. Schatzberg seems satisfied that his analysis is one which aims to look at the state 'from the bottom up'. He approvingly quotes Nzongola-Ntalaja's criticism to the effect that most academicians fail to include these ordinary folks, but fails to realise that his own exercise is far from responding to Nzongola's call. One cannot agree that it is even a partial step in the direction called for by the Zairian scholar. If Schatzberg had seriously considered the insurrections, he could not have restricted the scope of his analysis to the 'pockets of resistance internal to the state'. Moreover, he would have realised that, during that period, 1963-67, it was indeed the ordinary folks who had the state on the run, and not the other

way round. But he chose to look only at the relationship between the ordinary folks and the state as one where the former's only options were to either 'flee from the state or welcome it' (p 143).

The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire does contain two major chapters which look at resistance against the state, but these two chapters ignore the insurrections which covered more than half the country in 1963-64, and which were such a threat to the Congo that their defeat required the combined military intervention of Belgium, Great Britain and the USA. Instead, Schatzberg chose to focus on the internal resistance coming from the judicial branch and the churches. To be sure, these have played a very important role, but these pockets of resistance have shied away from calling for the radical overthrow of the regime. This is in sharp contrast to the way in which Mulele and his followers described their objectives, and one may presume that the differences may account for the discriminatory treatment. Given the understated ideological objective of the book, it is not surprising that the author preferred to stay away from analysing the most serious challenge to the neo-colonial regime in Zaire. The underlying theoretical aim was to provide an alternative to Marxist, neo-Marxist and functionalist analyses. It seems that the author decided that the easiest way to do so was to ignore the most significant attempt to revolutionise the Congolese state, from a radical nationalist (some would argue Marxist) perspective.

Finally, it is difficult to follow the logic used to explain the alternating cycles of decline and ascendancy of the state. However, after presenting these cycles as a series of hypotheses which could be used as explanations for what the state or some other structure does or does not do, the reader is told that current knowledge is insufficient and therefore 'all such hypotheses must remain speculative' (p 143). Coming, as it does, at the end of the book, this is a rather disheartening statement, and one would have wished the author at least to suggest ways of remedying the situation. One way could have been to reject (rather than accepting), the thesis of Crawford Young and Thomas Turner in *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, because of its flawed problematisation and periodisation of the transition from the colonial state to the post-colonial state. Young and Turner's periodisation suffers from the same defect noted in Schatzberg's book, namely an understanding of the colonial state as unproblematic up to 1960. Unsurprisingly, Young and Turner also fail to take into account the 1963-67 insurrections. Precisely because of that significant erasure, what they present as periods of decline of the state can be argued to have been periods of ascendancy, and vice versa.

As already stated, both authors rely on their massive amount of data to challenge some of the dominant theories on class formation, class relations and the state. In the case of Schatzberg, one is forced to reach the conclusion that each empirical situation could in fact spawn a different theoretical explanation. Thus, while Schatzberg's objective is to look at the 'Dialectics of Oppres-

sion in Zaire', the underlying, and more important goal is to try to provide a theorisation of the state, not only in Zaire, but, on the basis of Zairian local evidence, to advance a theory of the state in Africa. It may very well be that the attempt failed because it was far too ambitious. Although Schatzberg states in his introduction that his main concern is Zaire, the first chapter is focused on Africa. In it he seeks to provide a definition of the state in Africa whose main characteristic is to be as broadly encompassing as possible. Abstractly, the state can be viewed, along with ethnicity and class as a triple helix structure. In addition to this, the definitions of class, ethnicity and the state cannot be grasped independently in either time or space; 'Class, like ethnicity, is contextually fluid. The identity, composition, and boundaries of social class often vary according to the contexts of the moment' (p 9). Likewise for the state, which, like class and ethnicity, is 'a contextual phenomenon' (p 18). One would have thought that with such a definition of the relationship between class, state and ethnicity, Schatzberg would have given equal treatment to all parts of the triple helix. Instead, he has focused on the state to the point of making one wonder whether the triple helix did not at times become the triple state.

In the end, and despite his objective of looking at the relationship between civil society and the state, it is the bureaucratic apparatus of the state which establishes the parameters for the discussion. More precisely, civil society is part of the analysis insofar as it is seen as operating within the arena of state power politics. In *Entrepreneurs and Parasites*, MacGaffey reproduces a similar error, although in her case, it is more acceptable since her objective is restricted to the study of relations between the capitalist factions operating in Zaire. The first (official) economy and the second (unofficial, parallel) economy are not important because of all the actors involved, but because they are set up as a stage for discussing the dominant competing capitalists on both sides of this artificial fence: the entrepreneurs and the parasites. Like *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*, *Entrepreneurs and Parasites* contains a wealth of data collected with the same perspective in mind: to seek to understand the larger scene by studying 'the bottom' or, in relation to the state, what lies on the periphery. Whereas Schatzberg geographically focuses on Equateur Region, MacGaffey focuses on Haut Zaire and Kivu.

As I understand it, MacGaffey's thesis is that it is not possible to understand the Zairian economy today without analysing what she calls the second economy. This is somewhat coterminous with what is sometimes referred to as the informal sector. Over the years, this informal sector has become so large that it can no longer be used as a residual category, but researchers do not seem to be able to make the transition. Part of the difficulty may lie in the fact that the informal sector does not easily lend itself to measurement because the statistical apparatus normally used for the formal sector has not been designed for something as intractable as the informal sector.

Yet, it is increasingly clear that the driving force behind most Third World

economies today comes from this so-called informal sector, which, if only for this reason alone, it would be erroneous to call the 'second' economy, for this is the sector which has given these economies their staying power. In that sense, there is a parallel between the role commonly attributed to the informal sector and that played by women, something MacGaffey is keenly aware of and rightly stresses. Having recognised the above, her aim is somewhat similar to that of Michael Schatzberg: to divert the analysis away from those who are supposed to be formally controlling the state to those who, in their daily lives have to confront it, dodge it. For MacGaffey, this confrontation at the level of the economy is epitomised by the struggle between the parasites and the entrepreneurs, the former using and abusing their position within the state bureaucracy to accumulate wealth, and prevent anyone else from doing the same. Despite these tactics, a class of entrepreneurs has arisen in Zaire. Without saying so, MacGaffey looks upon the parasites as the 'bad' capitalists and the entrepreneurs as the 'good' capitalists.

At the theoretical level this description of the Zairian economy does present problems which the author does not confront. Distinguishing between the first (official) and the second (unofficial, parallel) economy brings one back to the earlier debates around the dual economy theories. The central question which is not posed by MacGaffey, and one which is crucial if her theory of two separate economies is to hold, is which class or classes are responsible for the process of accumulation. Are the parasites parasitic because they are fighting good entrepreneurs or because they are super-exploiting the peasantry and the workers? Confronted with the parasitic politico-commercial bourgeoisie, the entrepreneur may appear as the underdog, but in the Zairian context of dog cat dog capitalism, the entrepreneurs can only outdo their competitors by engaging in systems of exploitation which are even more exploitative. In her view, the second economy has grown so large that it has become attractive to peasants and workers. In the second economy, peasants have greater autonomy in retaining control over their means of production, and as to the workers, '[T]hey not only managed to survive but found alternatives to wage labour and thus the means to avoid proletarianization and to resist the excessive appropriation and predatory activities of the dominant class. Furthermore some even accumulated considerable wealth' (p 123). The author's description of the second economy is not rosy, and yet the above summation seems to paint the second economy as the saviour of Zaire. The activities of these good capitalists toward workers is only comparable to those of Good Samaritans because 'they provide alternatives to wage labour and thus the means to avoid proletarianization' (p 25).

On the basis of her own empirical data, it is difficult to agree with such a characterisation. From the point of view of the workers and the peasants, they are only confronted with one dominant economy in which the owners of the means of production will constantly seek to extract a growing surplus. It is

surprising to see the author quoting approvingly one of the authors (N Kasfir) who has articulated this very position (p 24), and yet, subsequently move away from it. The statements to the effect that workers and peasants are better off in the second economy is simply not buttressed by the data. The fact that some workers and some peasants do manage to get out of their poverty through the second economy cannot be seen as a valid basis for the generalisation that she advances. Finally, the question arises as to who decides which capitalist is the entrepreneur and which one is parasitic. According to MacGaffey's model, someone like Mobutu would obviously fall into the category of the parasites. And yet, by the same token, the president of the country owns shares in businesses which, according to the author's criteria, would qualify as entrepreneurial.

In summary, while appreciating both authors' efforts and well-argued case for moving away from state power-focused analyses, it is difficult at all levels to accept their implicit and explicit theoretical attempts to explain the phenomena they so aptly describe.

BOOK REVIEWS

Marxism and Democracy in Chile: from 1932 to the fall of Allende

Julio Faúndez

New Haven/London: Yale University Press. 1988. 305pp. £18.50hb

Pinochet: the politics of power

Genaro Arriagada

London/Boston: Unwin Hyman. 1988. 196pp. £25.00hb/£8.95pb

The Chilean Political Process

Manuel Antonio Garretón

London/Boston: Unwin Hyman. 1989. 220pp. £28.00hb/£12.95pb

Chile was one of the few dictatorships in Latin America able to resist the tide of democratisation during the early 1980s. It is indeed ironic that a country once renowned for its longstanding parliamentary tradition, and so often regarded as an island of democracy surrounded by authoritarian regimes, should now be moving so belatedly and uncertainly towards civilian rule. The explanation for this apparent paradox is rooted in Chile's social and political development during the past fifty years. All three books under review address the dilemmas confronting the country and reveal a common thread on which both the left and the right agree: the need for a radical restructuring of the political and socio-economic order.

Julio Faúndez, a former research fellow at the University of Chile, focuses on the two major parties on the Chilean left, the socialists and communists, during the half century prior to the military coup that overthrew the Popular Unity President, Salvador Allende, in 1973. The immediate reaction is to baulk at the prospect of reading yet another post-mortem on Chile's Marxist experiment. The lessons to be drawn from the failure of the Chilean road to socialism have spawned a substantial literature among US, European and Chilean exile academics. It is no exaggeration to say that the quality has not matched the quantity and that much of the debate has tended to mirror the Chilean left's own endemic factionalism. Squabbles over past mistakes undoubtedly hindered the emergence of a united opposition front to the military dictatorship.

Fortunately, Faúndez avoids the polemicism and apportioning of blame in his readable and carefully researched contribution to the literature on Chilean democracy. His theme is how the socialist and communist parties reconciled their revolutionary Marxism with participation in the political system in a capitalist democracy. The study is divided into three parts. Part I examines the period 1932-52 when the Marxist parties joined several Radical Party-dominated governments and became a leading force in the trade union movement. There are sections on coalition politics during the Popular Front era and the creation of the national development corporation, CORFO, as the cornerstone in the national planning system. Part II assesses the period from 1952 to 1970 when the Marxist parties became the leading opposition force and fashioned the philosophy and strategy for the electoral road to socialism. Part III focuses on the Allende government, 1970-73, when the Popular Unity alliance began, in inauspicious

circumstances, the transition to socialism. What emerges quite clearly is the pivotal role played by developments in the 1960s, when a political system which reflected right-wing socio-economic interests was undermined by the processes set in motion by the Christian Democrat (CD) administration under Eduardo Frei. The rapid expansion in the size of the electorate, the growth of unionisation, the creation of thousands of grassroots organisations among the urban poor and the emergence of new forms of struggle—land seizures, squatter settlements, factory occupations—mobilised large sections of the population previously excluded from politics. Interestingly, as Faúnder points out, the Marxist parties were not in the vanguard of these changes and in fact the political mobilisation destroyed 'the hegemonic position of Communists and Socialists among working-class voters'. It was, however, the Popular Unity that benefited from frustration at the CD's reformism which had generated hopes and expectations that could not, in the short term, be fulfilled. The irony was that the UP embarked on its attempt to build socialism and transfer power to the people through the mechanisms of the existing system at a time when these structures were disintegrating. Allende, a politician of the old system, never came to terms with this fundamental reality.

While the controversy over the Popular Unity débâcle was raging, General Augusto Pinochet was constructing and consolidating his durable dictatorship. Apart from some studies of the free market economic models employed in the southern cone of South America, remarkably little attention has been paid to the regime's political evolution. Meanwhile many questions have remained unexplored and unanswered: how was Pinochet able to survive a deeper financial crisis, higher unemployment and levels of de-industrialisation greater than elsewhere in the region? Why could he brush aside international condemnation of Chile's human rights record? How was he able to resist the continent-wide trend towards military withdrawal from power despite the mass mobilisation of the opposition? Genaro Arriagada provides many of the answers. The Chilean dictatorship is distinctive for the way power is concentrated in the hands of one man. Pinochet is president of the republic, army commander-in-chief and generalissimo of the armed forces and, like Spain's General Franco, the regime is his personal vehicle. It is also distinguished by its longevity, having remained steadfast against myriad pressures including a longstanding constitutional tradition, an established system of political parties and interest groups, economic crises, prolonged opposition protests, international pressure for liberalisation and democratisation and, most recently, defeat in the 1988 plebiscite. Only a very exceptional regime could survive such a battery of challenges.

Arriagada is well equipped as an analyst of 'Pinochetism'. A leading Christian Democrat politician and political scientist, he led the opposition to the 1980 Constitution and was active in the 1988 plebiscite campaign. He believes that the army's constitutional tradition and, in particular, its professionalism and political isolation from society account for the highly personal dictatorship that emerged in Chile. Pinochet revived this tradition as a reaction to the politicisation of the barracks under Allende. Arriagada examines in fascinating detail how Pinochet accumulated power through the use of patronage, his administrative and manipulative talent and the quasi-religious promotion of the military's anti-communist mission. Today it is 'the most thoroughly militarised regime in the history of South American authoritarian governments'.

Manuel Antonio Garretón's study of the Chilean political process appears in the same series as Arriagada's book, but the similarities end there. Whereas the latter

provides a lucidly written and revealing study that can be recommended to both the specialist and the general reader, Garretón's book is turgid and obscure. It comprises a series of essays, first published in 1983 but now revised and updated for the English translation, and deals with the political system up to 1973, the Southern Cone authoritarian regimes, the Chilean military regime and the prospects for democracy. There is also a postscript on the 1988 plebiscite. Unfortunately, the text is so overlaid with the worst kind of social science jargon as to deter all but the most persevering reader. In the introduction, the military regime is described as 'an extreme case of exacerbation of the reactive-repressive and foundational dimensions'. The use of such language is a pity because Garretón has many perceptive insights into developments during the 1980s, in particular the evolution of the opposition to military rule and the problems it now faces. He identifies a set of obstacles to be overcome on the road to democracy and argues that, as the dictatorship has restructured the political system, simply ending military rule will only be the start. A new political formula and redefined civil-military relations are a prerequisite. Unfortunately, the persisting political party structure, with its emphasis on preserving political identities and promoting individual careers, plays into Pinochet's hands. When announcing reforms to the 1980 Constitution in June 1989, the dictator sounded an ominous warning: 'The armed forces will not accept that political power should again be assumed by the same people who in the past destroyed us morally, economically and politically.'

DAVID CORKILL

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The Miskito Indians of Nicaragua

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

London: Minority Rights Group. 1988. 19pp. £1.80/\$3.95pb

A Special Place in History: the Atlantic Coast in the Nicaraguan revolution

Jane Ireland

London: Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. 1988. 127pp. £3.95pb

Hurricane Joan smashed into Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast region on 22 October 1988. The hurricane caused \$840 million worth of damage to the whole country, leaving 432 casualties. Its effects were particularly vicious in the 50 per cent of Nicaragua's national territory which is the Atlantic Coast region. Although only 10 per cent of the country's three million population live in this region, the hurricane claimed 34 dead, 116 injured, and 64 missing. A massive 98 per cent of the population of the southern part of the region had to be temporarily evacuated; and 12.6 per cent of the northern half of the region. The hurricane brought Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast back onto the world's television screens for a brief period, just seven years after 'New Right' ideologues such as Jeane Kirkpatrick and Alexander Hogue had first focused world-wide press attention on the coastal region by accusing the revolutionary government in Managua of mass murder of the Miskito Indians.

The peddling of such fictions, combined with the real problems that the revolutionary government was having in coming to terms with a population which understood its oppression not in terms of class, but of race and ethnicity, meant that for a while the ideologists of the counter-revolution gained international attention. Yet, the high-level media focus also encouraged interest in studying the coast among historians, anthropologists, linguists, sociologists and journalists. International media interest tailed off as US allegations of gross human rights violations were refuted by reputable human rights organisations such as Americas Watch, but many visiting scholars stayed to study the history and contemporary society of Nicaragua's multi-ethnic and multi-national Atlantic Coast region.

The Miskito Indians of Nicaragua is the latest of several studies of the Atlantic Coast, its minority ethnic groups and the revolutionary government, published by one of the most respected of these scholars, Dr Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, Professor of Ethnic Studies at California State University, and Director of the Indigenous World Association. This nineteen-page pamphlet discusses the Miskito Indians, but does not neglect to mention the other five ethnic groups which make up the 250,000-strong Atlantic Coast population. These are the Sumu and Rama Indians, as well as the Garifuno, Creole and Mestizo peoples. The pamphlet is backed up by an excellent bibliography of historical and contemporary work on the Atlantic Coast.

Dr Ortiz outlines the key historical events which have shaped today's Atlantic Coast society, particularly the competing colonialisms of England and Spain, the Moravian Church, US business and government, the Somoza dictatorship and the struggle against Somocista repression. She describes Miskito-Sandinista relations since the revolution, and how initial hostility turned to reconciliation as the government entered into the two-year-long 'impressive' consultation process on the proposals for the Autonomy Law of 1987. Her main criticism of the Autonomy Law is that although constituting 'an advance', it also 'exhibits a lack of understanding of the indigenous issue, beyond the dimensions of racial discrimination and cultural/social/economic marginalization' (p 12).

This is a serious criticism from one who has been close to the Nicaraguan process, and it reflects, to some extent, the position outlined by the larger of the Miskito opposition groups still in exile, MISURASATA. Despite this criticism, Dr Ortiz defines the main problem for the Miskito Indians as external to Nicaragua. While the US continues to finance the war, little further progress can be made in advancing the struggles of the indigenous peoples.

Jane Freeland's *A Special Place in History* is a useful addition to the recent body of literature on the coast. For the solidarity activist who wishes to become better informed, the book provides an indispensable compendium of historic and contemporary events, organisations and legislation. For the scholar, the most interesting section - as one might expect from this author, a professional linguist - is the short chapter describing the multilingual and multicultural education process. The book is an illustrated and pleasantly readable snapshot of Atlantic Coast history and society. For the student or researcher who wishes to pursue further study, however, *A Special Place in History* is sometimes disappointing, as references and citations have been kept to a minimum.

There are now, however, more than sufficient studies which can make up the bibliographic balance, including the *Miskito Indians of Nicaragua* pamphlet. More importantly, this welter of information about the coast could well serve as a catalyst to

keep the region in the public eye. Nicaragua needs international help to reconstruct the hurricane-shattered coastal economy, particularly if it is to remain, as Dr Ortiz describes it, '... a virtual laboratory for assessing the standards of indigenous rights and the standards and terms of autonomy' (p 4).

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Grenada: the untold story

Gregory Sandford and Richard Vigilante

London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988. 180pp. £6.95hb

Red Calypso: the Grenadian revolution and its aftermath

Geoffrey Wagner

London: The Claridge Press, 1988. 264pp. £8.95pb

Six years after the US invasion of Grenada, the events leading to the collapse of the revolution and the death of the prime minister, Maurice Bishop, remain unclear and open to wildly varying interpretations. Far from throwing light on the revolution's self-destruction, the trial of Bernard Coard *et al* has merely degenerated into a legalistic war of attrition, while a promised government inquiry has never materialised. For the left in the Caribbean region, Grenada represents a traumatic ideological reversal which has led to sectarian division and demoralisation. For the right, however, both regionally and further afield, the death of Bishop and the US invasion symbolise a self-fulfilling prophecy: that all revolutions devour their own children, that 'communism' is intrinsically a destructive phenomenon.

These two books share this basic anti-communist perspective. *Grenada: the untold story* is essentially the 'official' State Department version of the Grenadian revolution, and, as such, is implicitly a justification of the US military action. It draws heavily on the documents confiscated by the US army of occupation in October 1983 and therefore contains some interesting insights into the debates within the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) and the New Jewel Movement (NJM). Its sensationalist claim to reveal how the revolution was 'fanatically dedicated to turning Grenada into a West Indian version of the Soviet Union' is not, however, supported by its own evidence. Instead, the book outlines an almost cautious attempt to diversify and modernise the tiny island's overwhelmingly agricultural economy by building an agro-industrial sector, expanding tourism through a new international airport and seeking aid and new markets among the Soviet bloc and non-aligned nations. While recognising some positive aspects of the PRG's social reforms in health, education and housing, the book is harsh on its economic policies, taking internal party discussion documents as evidence of a plan to collectivise all agriculture. It also refutes the argument that the airport was vital to an increased tourist industry (a view subsequently fully endorsed by the USA) and accuses the state sector of incompetence and corruption. Little hard evidence is produced to support these allegations, and when the authors list the weaponry found by the US invasion force as proof of a regional security threat, the reader's credence is liable to be stretched.

Sandford and Vigilante are more convincing in their narrative of the internal power-struggle within the NJM, largely because the documents speak for themselves. Here, a combination of naive vanguardism, personal ambition and dwindling popular support emerges as the fatal precondition to the revolution's demise. Gradually the army takes centre stage, supporting the authoritarian tendency within the leadership and marginalising the revolution's link with the majority of Grenadians-- Maurice Bishop. Bishop, meanwhile, emerges from this book as a conscious communist who deliberately withheld his true political programme from the people (as such, this version varies from subsequent US propaganda which contrasts the innocuous 'leftist' Bishop with the ruthless 'Marxist' Coard). The authors have trouble, however, in accounting for Bishop's perfectly public ideological pronouncements in their particular conspiracy theory. The more general difficulty in explaining away popular support for the PRG is reflected in the bizarre assertion that although Grenada was being transformed into a Soviet-style economy and a Cuban military base, 'the shocking thing is that the Grenadian people never knew this'.

In comparison with Geoffrey Wagner's *Red Calypso*, Sandford and Vigilante's account might be taken as almost objective towards the revolution and its aims. Wagner's claim to authenticity is seemingly based on his having lived in Grenada before, during and after the revolution. But, in this case, proximity is apparently no obstacle to imaginative elaboration or, at times, pure fantasy. Thus, Wagner authoritatively asserts that a Soviet submarine base was under construction (a fact not even known to the US State Department), that the US invasion force faced 'Russian Spetsnaz commandos' (an allusion, I suspect, to a James Bond film) and that Soviet advisers had already printed ration cards for a future Pol Pot-inspired regime (evidence hitherto confined to the author alone). Wagner's ire, however, is not exclusively directed against the revolution and Maurice Bishop (consecutively described as a 'pimp' and a drug-abuser), but against a rich variety of targets which range from Islington Council and *The Guardian* ('ultra-left') to Nicaragua and US 'liberals'. Dubious asides and digressions fill the rambling text: particular venom is reserved for the 'cosmopolitan' press, for black governments in Africa and for the 'armies of wetbacks' which cross the US-Mexican border. Badly written, repetitious and full of simple errors, *Red Calypso* is less a credible account of the Grenadian revolution than an obsessive invective against the modern world by an author who modestly describes himself as one of the 'last scholar gypsies'.

Poor as these books are, they are nevertheless of some interest in revealing both the more or less official US vision of revolutionary Grenada and the extent to which the revolution can be distorted by the far-right fringe. Both views now seem increasingly anachronistic in a post-Cold War context (*Grenada: the untold story* was first published in the US in 1984 but only relatively recently in the UK) and almost untouched by changing realities in superpower relations. Perhaps the reader would be better advised to consult Gordon K Lewis's *Grenada: the jewel despoiled** for a serious attempt to analyse the events of October 1983 which continue to reverberate in the Caribbean today.

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* *Grenada: the jewel despoiled* was reviewed in *Third World Quarterly* 11(1) January 1989, pp 206-8.

East Asia, the West and International Security

Edited by Robert O'Neill

London: Macmillan (with the International Institute for Strategic Studies). 1987. 253pp. £35.00hb

East Asian Conflict Zones: prospects for regional stability and deescalation

Edited by Lawrence E Grinter and Young Whan Kihl

London: Macmillan. 1987. 239pp. £29.50hb

Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN perceptions of external threats

Robert O Tilman

Boulder, Colorado/London: Westview Press. 1987. 194pp. £20.50hb

ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia

Edited by Michael Leifer

London: Routledge. 1989. 198pp. £30.00hb

Despite lasting memories of major wars and a bright promise of economic growth and prosperity, the Asia-Pacific region still remains one of the most volatile spots in today's world politics. Protracted conflicts are pervasive, and military tension is high. Ever-present hegemonic rivalry, fragmented defence structure, deep-rooted feelings of suspicion and distrust, and proliferating national instabilities continue to make peace and stability in the region a precarious proposition. The volumes under review represent recent scholarly efforts to understand the complex nature of the security dimensions in Asia, and to look into the prospects of regional stability.

Robert O'Neill's *East Asia, the West and International Security* is a collection of articles presented to the twenty-eighth International Institute for Strategic Studies Annual Conference, held in Kyoto, Japan, in 1986. The volume explores the broad themes of global strategic trends, recent East Asian regional dynamics, and the prospects of security cooperation between East Asia and the West. A shared feeling throughout the volume is that the Soviet threat is real and on the rise. It is in this context that the concept of common security is explored, and the ways and means of enhancing security cooperation between the two theatres are sought. The growing convergence of threat perceptions and security interests notwithstanding, contributors fail to reach a consensus on how to translate this convergence into a viable institutional mechanism of security cooperation. This is a result not only of divergent political and defence structures, but also of newly emerging patterns of conflict and cooperation between the two, involving trade, technology, and security. Yet contributors appear to agree that an informal, multilateral process of consultation is more feasible and desirable than a formal institutional setting.

This volume features excellent commentary and analysis on recent global strategic trends and regional dynamics in East Asia, by eminent scholars and policy-makers. Some chapters are short and sketchy, but most are highly informative. Perhaps its real strength lies in efforts to create a new trilateral forum linking East Asia, the USA and

Western Europe. In this sense, the inclusion in the volume of two Chinese scholars (Zhang Jingyi and Yao Wenbin) is noteworthy. O'Neill should be commended for his superb editorial work in weaving diverse and often conflicting chapters into one common thread, and in producing a cogent and unbiased conclusion. The volume is not without some drawbacks, however. By portraying the Soviet Union as an aggressive hegemonic contestant against which the security interests of East Asia and the West converge, contributors not only downplay the recent peace efforts by Gorbachev, but also appear to revive the fallacious theme of confrontation and containment. The Vladivostok declaration, which contributors use as a frame of reference for the Soviet Union's Asia-Pacific policy, was only an overture: Gorbachev's peace initiative has taken much more concrete form in both Europe and Asia over the last two years, and seriously undermines the main thrust of the argument presented in the volume. In addition to this substantive drawback, the book reveals a minor defect: an uneven and inconsistent editorial style. The diversity of tone, ranging from the keynote speech (Kissinger) and policy position papers (Kim) to analytical articles (Inoguchi) and comments (Nye and Holst) tarnishes the quality of the volume. Nonetheless, the book is an outstanding contribution to the study of global strategic trends, Soviet foreign policy and East Asian security in the 1980s, and is highly recommended for laymen, scholars and policy-makers.

While O'Neill's volume seeks a global strategic design involving East Asia and the West, *East Asian Conflict Zones* is much narrower in scope. The editors, Grinter and Kihl, disaggregate the East Asian conflict system into seven prominent conflicts and tension areas (the Sino-Soviet dispute, the Japanese Northern territories, the Sea of Japan, the South China Sea, the Korean conflict, Thai-Vietnamese rivalry, and communist insurgency in the Philippines), and explore alternative ways of de-escalating and even resolving them. Unlike most edited volumes, this brings together articles of a surprisingly even quality. They constitute largely descriptive and historical analyses, but are rich and detailed in empirical content. Olsen's discussion of the Sea of Japan and Weatherbee's analysis of the South China Sea are particularly relevant in view of recent debates on sealane safety and the US maritime strategy. Grinter and Kihl's concluding chapter also presents fresh and provocative ideas on tension reduction and conflict resolution in the region.

As with O'Neill's book, however, superpower determinism dominates *East Asian Conflict Zones*. Action and reaction between the USA and the Soviet Union is conceived as being the principal determinant of force escalation and patterns of regional conflict. Such orientation appears to neglect other important variables such as domestic political dynamics and leadership perception. In addition, the editors' introductory analysis, the individual case-studies, and the concluding policy prescriptions do not complement each other, thus weakening the analytical coherence of the book. Despite this shortcoming, the volume makes an important theoretical contribution to the study of East Asian security by differentiating the East Asian conflict system into zones and issues and subjecting them to thorough analysis. The volume can be used as an ideal supplementary textbook for the study of international conflict or East Asian security.

Robert Tilman's *Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond* is an empirical study of elite threat perception within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In contrast to the above volumes, Tilman emphasises the importance of perceptual variables

For him, external threats do not have full meaning until they are perceived by decision-makers, filtered through a complex interplay of their cognitive structure and policy setting, and translated into final decisions, policies, and actions. By combining this first image analysis with an extensive field survey, the author arrives at several interesting observations. Despite a similar security environment, external threat perceptions are not uniform. They vary across ASEAN countries, depending on targets and other contextual variables. Furthermore, non-military threats such as economic, cultural, and technological ones are perceived as being as important as external military ones.

Tilman makes an ambitious attempt to trace the perceptual origins of ASEAN foreign policy by escaping from ecological determinism. This leads him to a more dynamic extrapolation of determinants of the foreign policy of ASEAN countries. As Tilman himself admits, however, the evidence is evasive, and the conclusions he draws are less than satisfactory, rendering the book a superficial, introductory survey of ASEAN foreign policy. In setting the scope of analysis too wide, and failing to incorporate interview and other primary source materials into the analysis, the book ends up as mediocre.

Michael Leifer's *ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia* is a study of the historical evolution of ASEAN. Leifer does not employ any specific theoretical framework, but his analysis is rich, lucid, and penetrating. Since its formation two decades ago, ASEAN has grown as an effective diplomatic device for sub-regional reconciliation and economic cooperation. Yet it has failed to realise any sense of a security community. Forces of integration and disintegration and of unity and divisiveness continue to threaten the cohesion and viability of ASEAN. Using the example of Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, Leifer skilfully elucidates the complex internal dynamics of ASEAN, and draws the conclusion that there are fundamental limits to security cooperation within the group. Asymmetry of security interests and lack of leadership commitment, among other factors, are likely to continue to hinder the transformation of ASEAN into a full-fledged regional integrative body. The volume represents a solid contribution to the understanding of ASEAN, and is essential reading for those who are interested in the region.

The lessons of these volumes are twofold. First, contrary to recent claims in the field of international relations, the realist paradigm has not yet vanished, at least in the Asian context. Second, the prospects for peace and stability in Asia are not bright.

CHUNG-IN MOON

University of Kentucky

Chinese Politics in Malaysia: a history of the Malaysian Chinese Association

Heng Pek Koon

Singapore: Oxford University Press. 1988. 307pp. £16.50hb

Ethnicity and the Economy: the state, Chinese business, and multinationals in Malaysia

James V Jesudason

Singapore: Oxford University Press. 1989. 218pp. £19.50hb

Malaysia should not, on the face of it, function at all as a coherent nation. That it has not been as successful economically as, for instance, South Korea is not really surprising

given the deep communal divisions which have led to the economic policies analysed by James Jesudason. That it achieved nationhood and, for most of the period since independence, has had a reasonably coherent and effective government has been due to the skill which has been shown by political party leaders. Again it would be astonishing if they had not fallen short, and on occasion a long way short, of the highest standards of political wisdom.

As Heng Pck Koon shows, no nation existed in the late 1940s, and his work underlines how crucial were the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and no less its founder and first leader, Tan Cheng Lock, in bringing the Chinese community into Malaya and so creating the foundation for Britain's handing over to an effective multiracial government. As late as 1949, most Chinese in Malaya saw themselves as Overseas Chinese, and in the case of those in business and trade, with an interest in politics, still looked to the Kuomintang which remained a significant focus well into the 1950s. In 1950, less than a quarter were Malayan citizens. Dr Heng argues that from the beginning Tan saw that effective integration meant political integration, and that this depended on obtaining the widest possible definition of citizenship for the Chinese.

The structure of the MCA was such that Tan and a small, mainly English-educated, elite mediated between the great mass of the *Laukeh* (those embedded in Chinese culture and who had received a Chinese education) on the one hand and the Malay nationalist leaders and colonial authorities on the other. Tan's task was to win and retain the trust of both sides, and to gain sufficient from the Malays and the British to satisfy the *Laukeh*. In the end the MCA succeeded in its major objective, a citizenship law based on *ius soli*, conceding in return special rights for the Malays. It failed, however, in its efforts both to gain official status for the Chinese language and to entrench fully the right to a Chinese-language education. In a final epilogue Dr Heng summarises the events since 1957. The MCA attempted to improve the terms of the independence bargain, but this was rejected by Tengku Abdul Rahman, and the MCA under Tan Siew Sin settled for a situation in which the Chinese would continue to dominate the economy, relying on good personal relations with the Prime Minister to ensure fair treatment. Jesudason argues that the Tengku in any case doubted the business acumen of Malays. The consequence was that the economic pattern remained much as in colonial days, and in 1970 the Malays still owned less than 2 per cent of the total value of shares. Such a situation was clearly unstable, and the 1969 communal violence led to a new era with United Malays' National Organisation (UMNO) totally dominant, and imposing the ethnically inspired New Economic Policy (NEP) on a demoralised MCA and a frightened Chinese community.

The NEP was designed to restructure the economy, aiming at a 30 per cent Malay ownership (with a 40 per cent non-Malay and 30 per cent foreign ownership) by 1990. Jesudason's thesis is that this could only be achieved through the state, with public bodies acquiring shares, control and management opportunities on behalf of the Malays. At the same time, private firms were required to amend their share-owning pattern to meet the NEP percentages. While foreign companies were able to accept this, Chinese concerns sought various ways of avoiding compliance. They also adopted a policy of seeking quick profits, investing in property or indulging in mergers and take-overs rather than taking the longer-term and riskier path of investing in manufactures. The Malay public authorities purchased assets in mining, plantations and banking, on a massive scale, or made questionable investments in heavy industry, such as the

national car. There has consequently been a lack of dynamism and a failure to develop indigenous manufacturing. Jesudason goes on to argue that Malaysia has used multinationals to compensate for the resulting lack of jobs, providing Free Trade Zones where they could establish low-cost export-oriented factories, notably in textiles and electronics. He adds that little value was added in the manufacture, and little skill or technology transferred.

In elaborating this argument Jesudason describes the evolution of the Malayan/Malaysian economy during this century. Perhaps the most interesting section, however, is that in which he looks at the detailed application of the NEP, the operations of PERNAS and other public bodies, the response of Chinese entrepreneurs and the different approaches of the various multinationals. Step by step he demonstrates the consequences of adopting an ethnically and politically inspired policy rather than one based on an economic rationale.

The whole policy was only made possible by the high commodity prices of the 1970s and the discovery of oil and natural gas, which provided the necessary finance. The recession of the 1980s, particularly the fall in the price of oil, undermined the policy and exposed the structural weakness of the Malaysian economy, not to mention the incredible corruption in both Malay and Chinese public enterprises. Jesudason concludes Chapter 6 with an apocalyptic vision of what could happen if multinational investment fell further still, and commodity prices stagnated. At present it appears that the 1985-86 crisis has been overcome, prices have risen and the economy is once more growing. The divisions inside UMNO, partly a result of the recession, seem to be healing and the MCA has performed well in 1989 by-elections. Nevertheless, Jesudason has demonstrated clearly the vulnerability of the economy. He also argues that a change of policy would be very difficult since UMNO's fortunes are very much tied to the implementation of the NEP, and the recovery in Mahathir's fortunes makes it seem even less likely. Malaysia will thus continue to live dangerously in economic terms for the foreseeable future.

STUART DRUMMOND

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The Ethnic Chinese in the ASEAN States: bibliographical essays

Edited by Leo Suryadinata

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. 1989. 271 pp. \$28.00hb

This is an uneven and unsatisfactory book which would have benefited from better editing. It comprises seven chapters, four of which concern specific countries: Indonesia; Malaysia and Singapore; the Philippines; and Thailand. The first chapter, by Leo Suryadinata, is a general one on 'The ethnic Chinese in the ASEAN states' and there are two specialist chapters, one on the 'Religions of the Chinese in Indonesia' by Iem Brown and one on 'Chinese education in Malaysia and Singapore' by Tan Liok Ec. The editor describes how the four country profiles were originally presented as conference papers, and how the specialist papers were subsequently commissioned to give the book more substance.

The unevenness of the book arises principally from its heterogeneity. The two special chapters do not sit well in the company of the others, and the subjects they address could have been—and in the case of some material, have partially been—incorporated into other chapters. The degree of repetitiveness is also irksome in other ways. There is, for example, little in the editor's introductory chapter which is not covered more adequately elsewhere. Furthermore, there is an irritating litany-like repetition of reference to certain scholars, Freedman and Skinner in particular, who are praised for their pioneering work in the 1950s.

Clearly the writers of the chapters were given very little editorial direction concerning the way in which they should undertake their bibliographical reviews. Consequently, the writers—Dede Oetomo on Indonesia, Tan Liok Ee, and, to some extent, Tan Chee-Beng on Malaysia—have listed almost everything known to them with very little comment. True, Tan Chee-Beng does say that some works have proved more useful than others, and all writers mention areas on which research still needs to be done, but the analytical comment is minimal. Jennifer Cushman, however, treats us to an extensive summary of major works on Thailand by Skinner, Coughlin and Boonsanong, but saves herself little space to deal with more recent works. A pity, since students of the Chinese in Southeast Asia might well be taken to be familiar already with the senior scholars, and would surely have welcomed more extensive discussion of recent work.

Nor is there a uniform format to the chapters, another feature for which the editor must take the blame. Some chapters contain detailed references in the text, others leave references to the end. Surprisingly in a book which is avowedly bibliographical, one chapter, Cushman's, does not give details of publishers in the set of references. In terms of format the late Chinben See's concise and considered article on the Philippines could have been a model for the other writers.

In terms of coverage, the assiduous reader will find several omissions and an over-reliance on pre-1960s material. Tan Liok Ee's article shows that a great deal of more recent writing is to be found in academic dissertations and writings, but no other contributor seems to have combed this potential source. Of the subjects of interest to contemporary observers of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, those that come immediately to mind are: the alliance of Chinese business with the indigenous elite in Indonesia, the friction between the two major parties representing Chinese interests in Malaysia, the entry of the Sino-Thai into Thai politics, the political power of the wealthy Mestizo families in the Philippines and the Singapore government's uncertainty about *Guo-yu* and the Confucian ethic. None of these subjects is addressed in this book. Although the reason for this may be, as some contributors assert, lack of research and paucity of material, one cannot help feeling that it was in all likelihood a well-known uneasiness on the part of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies about publishing anything of a politically sensitive nature which persuaded editor and contributors alike to steer clear of these topics.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the book, it is, however, a useful, quick, first-reference book for the location of sources, but the serious student must use it with caution. Its most useful function is perhaps to draw to the reader's attention the meagreness of the research that is currently being conducted on the Chinese in Southeast Asia. For all the fine historical studies that have appeared in the last few years, there is very little of an anthropological nature which bears comparison with the monographs and close studies of the 1950s, and as for economic studies of the world of Overseas

Chinese commerce and banking, researchers have still to lift the veil which shrouds their mysteries.

WILLIAM BODDY

Poisoned Arrows: an investigative journey through Indonesia

George Monbiot

London: Michael Joseph. 1989. 249pp. £14.95hb

Books written about travel in tropical lands are so often rather aimless creations, self-indulgent, Eurocentric, dwelling on images of the exotic and unusual. Monbiot's book is different. As his subtitle suggests, his journey is organised as an investigation, and the reader's attention is held as the inquiry gathers pace. Rumours and fragmentary information about the abuse of human rights in Irian Jaya (West New Guinea), a remote part of the Indonesian archipelago, lead to Monbiot's search for the 'true' story, accompanied by his photographer friend, Adrian Arbib. As a result the author presents a powerful indictment of the Indonesian government's transmigration policy.

Monbiot's earlier visit to Indonesia as a tourist had left an impression of 'enchantment'. 'Indonesia was gentle, happy and as simple as a picture postcard in 1985, for I blissfully knew no better; it was all sun and sealife then' (p 3). This view was to change following his discoveries about the treatment of Irianese. He ends his quest with the remark 'Indonesia had lost its enchantment, and become dark and inimical to me. I would never be allowed back, and I imagined then that I would never want to go' (p 242). Monbiot undergoes a transformation from innocence to enlightenment, and, fortunately, accepts at the end of his journey that there is no simple 'truth' to be revealed; transmigration is a complex issue, and there is no one straightforward reason for it.

Monbiot explains that transmigration —the resettlement of mainly Javanese from the overcrowded island of Java to some of the more sparsely populated Outer Islands— is ostensibly to provide the landless and poor of Java with some land for cultivation. But Monbiot subsequently argues that in Irian Jaya at least it is much more to suppress and even eliminate a culturally very different people. It serves to redistribute the majority population, the Javanese, at the expense of the peripheral minorities, in the interest of promoting national security. Monbiot provides cases of indiscriminate killings and executions of Irianese by the Indonesian military and police, forced resettlement and land-grabbing. Loyal Javanese also displace the Irianese from government employment and provide labour necessary to exploit Irian's natural resources.

The book is well-written and fluent and provides an absorbing account of the extreme difficulties faced by the Irianese. It should serve to draw attention to their plight. Indeed, at the back of the book there is a separate 'Petition to the United Nations' and a tear-out page to collect signatures 'to ask the countries providing aid to Indonesia to impose humanitarian conditions on the grants and loans they make'. The organisation, Survival International, is an important supporter of Monbiot's book and its case.

There are three observations which I would wish to make. First, there is a certain disjointedness in the book. Monbiot's quest is interrupted by an interlude, comprising about one-third of the book, which describes his arduous journey from Wamena to

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Keneyan and on to Sawa-Erma and Agats. It is a gripping account, but it stands somewhat outside the central theme of the book. Secondly, as the dust cover blurb states, the author 'bluffed, cheated and forced his way into the forbidden territories of Irian Jaya'. There is an ethical issue here, in that Monbiot's actions could adversely affect the Indonesian government's attitude to other outsiders who wish to gain access to the country for various legitimate kinds of work. No doubt the Indonesian government's charge will be that reportage such as Monbiot's is impressionistic and ill-informed, based on a superficial acquaintance with the subject-matter. Thirdly, there is a general uninformedness and a certain naivety in Monbiot's work. The Indonesian government's transmigration policies in Irian Jaya are more widely known about than one would assume from the book. It is, of course, convenient for Monbiot's investigation to conclude with 'discoveries'. But one only has to read through the available literature on Indonesian resettlement schemes to appreciate their purposes and shortcomings. All policies of national economic development - not least transmigration - have a political dimension. They are about ordering the relations between the state and the people, securing greater state control and promoting national identity and security. Transmigration, then, is not a simple technical-economic procedure for helping to solve Java's population problems. Many of us have known that for some time.

VICTOR T KING

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Zimbabwe's Prospects: issues of race, class, state and capital in Southern Africa

Edited by Colin Stoneman

London: Macmillan. 1988. 377pp. £6.95pb

Zimbabwe: politics, economics and society

Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe

London: Pinter. 1988. 210pp. £25.00hb

The people of Zimbabwe will celebrate ten years of political independence in April 1990. It is an opportune time, therefore, to consider what have been the main political, social and economic achievements of the post-independence period in Zimbabwe and, in the light of this recent history, to assess the prospects for development for the next decade and beyond.

These two books provide valuable contributions to this process of reflection on the past and the future. Colin Stoneman has been a close observer of the Zimbabwean economy and society since the mid-1970s and, as both co-author and editor, he has done a creditable job.

Zimbabwe's Prospects is a substantial, well-produced paperback volume. Despite its title, all but three of the book's twenty chapters are principally concerned with reviewing major developments in the political economy of Zimbabwe since independence, and relating these to the world context of the late 1980s. The contributions by Obert Nyawata on 'Macroeconomic management, adjustment and stabilisation', Nelson Moyo on

'The hostile economic climate', and Michael Evans on 'The security threat from South Africa' are particularly good.

While recognising the considerable achievements that have been made since independence (particularly in smallholder agricultural production in the Communal Areas, and in health and education in general), the contributors, most of whom are committed Zimbabwean socialists, are critical of the Zimbabwe government under the leadership of President Robert Mugabe and the party, ZANU. Despite repeated political pronouncements that Zimbabwe is seeking a socialist development path, the evidence of the last decade indicates that the economic and social structures are still thoroughly capitalist and that the prospects of socialist transformation are becoming worse not better as time passes. What is in fact occurring, according to Arnold Sibanda, is the entrenchment of 'an anti-socialist bureaucratic bourgeoisie' that is essentially a comprador class in subordination to international imperialism.

While much of this criticism is valid and certainly well intentioned, there is, as Stoneman himself points out, a danger of sounding both vague and unduly critical. What has clearly marked out Mugabe's leadership is his realisation that Zimbabwe is a capitalist economy and that any attempt to transform Zimbabwean society radically is likely to fail if attempted too quickly. It is this respect, albeit grudging, for the fragility of the country's (capitalist) productive forces, and the complexity of any process that seeks to change these toward socialism, that underpins his position. As is well known, the experience of Mozambique across the border, and other hastily conceived and executed socialist development strategies in Africa and elsewhere, has been a constant reminder to Mugabe and other political leaders in Zimbabwe of the dangers of moving too fast.

Turning to the future, the contributors are generally pessimistic about the development prospects for Zimbabwe so long as the government continues to pursue essentially 'reformist' policies. The international economic climate will remain harsh so that Zimbabwe stands little chance of becoming a newly industrialising country (NIC). Unemployment is becoming a massive problem, with over 100,000 children pouring into the job market each year. Traditional smallholder agriculture cannot provide sufficient economic opportunities for a rapidly expanding rural population so long as the majority of farmers are confined to the mainly low-potential lands in the Communal Areas.

Certainly, Zimbabwe faces a difficult future. However, the severity of the constraints that have to be overcome is at times overstated. For example, Lionel Cliffe's one-page dismissal of improvement strategies for smallholder agriculture in the Communal Areas is breathtakingly simplistic. His harsh criticism of agricultural civil servants as adhering to a 'conservationist and technicist orthodoxy' completely fails to recognise the significant changes that have occurred in the orientation of agricultural research strategies and other agricultural services since independence. Similarly, while Stoneman chastises the government for its 'overambitious' development plans, he subsequently proposes that far-reaching land reforms should be undertaken which would stretch government resources beyond anything that has been attempted to date.

As socialists critical of present state policies and practices, the contributors are surprisingly reticent about tackling the key question of what ought to be done. In particular, the conclusions drawn by Pakkiri, Robinson and Stoneman in their chapter on 'Industry and planning in a small country' seem unsatisfactory. They argue that 'the structural nature of the constraints on Zimbabwe's future growth makes the future look gloomy . . . Orthodox prescriptions for Zimbabwe are unrealistic . . . It is political constraints

that prevent the finding of realistic solutions: we know that these solutions are available, as many countries have applied them; we know (or fear) that Zimbabwe at present cannot . . . There is little point in devising socialist blueprints in such a conjuncture and one must await the development of social forces which refuse to accept the existing unreality [sic]' (p 343). This seems an unduly defeatist position to adopt when there is still a continuing debate about major policy issues in the country. Surely Zimbabwean socialists can do more than offer generalised criticisms and equally generalised solutions while sitting back and hoping that the class struggle will one day swing their way! It is up to them as socialist intellectuals to present to the government and the party, if not blueprints, then at least well-researched, closely argued and, where appropriate, empirically supported policy alternatives. To argue that socialist solutions are available from other countries without even identifying these countries is tantalising to say the least - especially in the age of *perestroika*!

Robinson's chapter on 'Relaxing the constraints' comes the closest to presenting a reasoned challenge to existing policies. Even so, he merely calls for a 'shift of emphasis' rather than a radical 'alternative strategy'. He argues that future policies must attack the acute import dependence of the economy by encouraging investment in more domestically orientated production. This semi-autarchic-delinking approach would give primary emphasis to agriculture and rural development. Robinson recognises correctly that the success of this approach depends critically not only on political considerations but, equally importantly, on the availability of resources and the people with the skills to execute them.

Zimbabwe: politics, economics and society is 'a basic textbook offering an overview of Zimbabwe to a non-specialist student audience, chiefly in the Western world', in Pinter's series on 'Marxist Regimes'. While benefiting from being the work of two hands (or heads) rather than twenty (as is the case with *Zimbabwe's Prospects*), it cannot provide the same breadth and depth of treatment in a mere 195 pages. Also, the text is at times turgid and is generally poorly edited and referenced.

The first three parts of the book concern history and political traditions, social structures and the political system. It is here that the authors attempt to address the basic 'anomaly' that Zimbabwe's official political creed is Marxism-Leninism but that, in practice, the state's policies and practices remain 'unequivocally capitalist'.

In common with other Marxist theorising on class in sub-Saharan Africa, their political analysis focuses on the nature of the black petty bourgeoisie in Zimbabwe. Just who comprises this petty bourgeoisie is never precisely defined, mainly because it is an essentially residual agglomeration of individuals who are not straightforwardly capitalist, peasant or proletarian. As to the exact nature of this 'class', Stoneman and Cliffe remain uncertain. They opt, therefore, for the now fairly standard 'class in formation' formulation that argues that the ruling petty bourgeoisie could go either way: towards a conventional comprador position or, alternatively, its more progressive elements could still win the day for socialism. Perhaps not surprisingly, there appears to be limited documented research on this political and social process in Zimbabwe. What is disappointing however, is that Marxist theorising on issues of class in Zimbabwe in the late 1980s seems to be no more advanced than it was twenty years ago when strikingly similar debates took place about the nature of the state in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa. Perhaps the best course would be to expunge the whole concept of the petty bourgeoisie and its numerous variants!

The 'Economic system' and the 'Regime's policies' are handled in a competent manner in the second half of the book although it is difficult not to be somewhat superficial and descriptive when covering such an enormous range of issues in just seventy pages. A number of major questions are asked but little or no attempt is made to answer them. As in *Zimbabwe's Prospects*, Stoneman and Cliffe argue that only major land reform and more autarchic industrialisation policies can provide the basis for sustained, equitable development in Zimbabwe.

PAUL BENNELI.

Brighton

De Verborgen Camera (The Hidden Camera)

Amsterdam: C'ASA. 1989. 25 guilders

The Cinema of Apartheid: race and class in South African film

Keyan Tomaselli

London/New York: Routledge. 1989. 299pp. £9.95pb

Photography can be a weapon, as can the cinema, depending, of course, on who wields it, in what circumstances, and for what purpose. This fact is amply demonstrated in both volumes under review, though with varying conclusions.

De Verborgen Camera is directly linked to the Culture in Another South Africa (C'ASA) Festival organised in Amsterdam in December 1987. One of the main events of this memorable coming-together of 300 South Africans from home and exile was a major exhibition of photographs taken by both expert photographers and amateurs, sometimes under very dangerous circumstances. Due to the stringent State of Emergency measures, most of them could not be published in newspapers. They are collected in this volume, in a necessarily reduced but nevertheless sufficient format, some printed on a double-page, all bearing witness to what it has been like to live and struggle in South Africa since the beginning of the 1980s, and more particularly from 1983 to 1987. If the purpose of censorship and intimidation was to make the world believe that 'no news meant good news', this book will dispel all doubts.

This does not mean that the photographers have recorded only scenes of violence and 'unrest'.* There are many, of course, of the kind one finds it difficult to look at, but as Paul Weinberg, one of the photographers included in the collection, has explained in *Culture in Another South Africa* (1989), he and his colleagues 'show a South Africa in conflict, in suffering, in happiness and in resistance'. Whether the camera has been focused on the faces, anonymous or not, of humble people in the rural areas or in the townships, on workers, strikers, trade-unionists, cultural activists or community leaders, the overall impression is of a spirit of determination. Indeed, as the afterword tells us: 'While in recent years, we have been on the frontline of the apartheid war, we have at the same time been intimately close to resistance to apartheid. While the camera has been the recorder of the nightmare, it is also the silent witness to the dream that will be

* For a correct assessment of this word, see Jan van Eck, *Eyewitness to 'Unrest'*, Emmarentia. South Africa: Taurus, 1989.

translated into the reality of an "other" South Africa.' There is a very moving introduction to the volume by John Berger.

If photography has become democratised in the widespread process of cultural and political activity at grassroots and trade-union level, the same cannot be said of the cinema. This is one of the conclusions reached by Keyan Tomaselli in his apparently exhaustive study of the South Africa cinematographic world. The making of films during the 1910-85 period (a full list of which—including the language(s) in which they were made—is provided as an appendix) shows that from its very inception, cinema has been submitted, either directly or indirectly, to several dictates. The evidence suggests that the film industry in South Africa has been an instrument of propaganda, and the objective alliance between state and business interests has led to a terrible poverty in the otherwise innovative field of cinema production. Tomaselli, who has left no aspect aside, gives several interesting case-studies to illustrate his findings. A combination of official censorship and self-censorship has been, and still is, exercised by the various productive and distributive channels. Conformity, linked as it is with racial differentiation and the conservative nature of the distributors, accounts for the poor quality of the films and for their open or subtle bias. Tomaselli, while noting the development of the independent cinema and video-filming, underlines the material obstacles they have to overcome. He is careful to note, though, that 'liberation towards the making of critical films lies not only in technical expertise, but in a counter-ideological commitment allied to a theoretical knowledge of cinema and its role in society' (p 65).

The book is a thorough and reliable source of documentation: the sometimes academic approach to the subject should not deter a wide public from accompanying the author behind the scenes, to the offices where scripts are planned, subsidies controlled, and audiences targeted, and it will be an indispensable tool for researchers and students. Besides the wealth of notes and references, there is a bibliography and filmography taking into account most of what has been published on the subject in South Africa or abroad. It would be fair to add, since the author mentions Bloke Modisane as having helped Lionel Rogosin in the making of *Come Back Africa*, that Lewis Nkosi was also co-author and consultant on the film, and that he wrote a very fine piece of criticism for the left-wing paper, *Fighting Talk*, which was soon after to be banned ('On Making A Film', February 1960). Much of what Nkosi was then writing was to become his credo in assessing literature by black writers. It is indeed true, as he wrote, that 'in South Africa, a film producer has to watch out, first and foremost, against the temptation to overlay his picture. The material lends itself so readily to the kind of propaganda that tends to defeat the very purpose of the film, not so much because he distorts the truth, but because there is too much of it. I mean truth that is social fact rather than aesthetic'. While the cine-camera, as well as the camera, are still invaluable witnesses, and as such contribute to keeping the outside world informed on what the state wants to hide, it is noteworthy that in recent years, in the field of the theatre and short-story writing, there has been an effort not to sacrifice the aesthetic aspect. This may be the best way to make one's weapons sharper.

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Empire and Islam: Punjab and the making of Pakistan

David Gilmartin

London: I B Tauris. 1988. 304pp. £24.50hb

David Gilmartin's thesis in *Empire and Islam* is that 'only by examining the relationship between Islam and Empire can the movement for the creation of a new Muslim State be understood'. The focus of his study is the British Punjab, one of the two largest and most important Muslim provinces in India, which came to constitute Pakistan.

The study initially outlines the imperial system of authority established by the British in the Punjab, and the relationship of Islamic ideals and institutions to that system. The author describes with extraordinary accuracy and authentic original documentation the socio-economic and religious mould of the countryside, inherited by the British from their Sikh and Mughal predecessors, and how the British with the aid of the Land Alienation Act and other such measures perpetuated it, to ensure subservience to permanent colonial rule. These measures included the primacy of customary law (to the extent that it differed from *Sharia*); and the recognition and effective control by the district authorities of the institutions of 'Zaildars',¹ 'Jagirdars',² 'Safedposh',³ 'Pirs',⁴ and 'Sajjadah Nashins'.⁵ The author perceptively describes the communal overtones of urban politics, in which the Muslim intelligentsia was in conflict with both the rural hierarchy and the urban non-Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

The author goes on to describe the workings of democracy during the period 1920–37 under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The role of the Unionist Party, with its emphasis on agriculturists versus non-agriculturists and the removal of rural backwardness, is seen merely as supportive of colonial rule. The author examines the provincial autonomy under the 1935 Act which led after 1937 to the campaign for the establishment of Pakistan. With the decisive victory of the Punjab Muslim League in the 1946 elections, Punjabi Muslims—rural and urban—are shown to be the *force majeure* in the creation of the Islamic State of Pakistan. The author calls it the triumph of 'Din' (religion) over 'Dunya' (the material world). While David Gilmartin cannot be faulted in his narration of the events and movements which led to the cataclysmic partition of the subcontinent, he overstates by the exclusion of other factors, how 'Din' overwhelmed 'Dunya' through the medium of the erstwhile supporters of the Unionist Party and of the British Raj, 'Zaildars', 'Jagirdars', 'Safedposh', 'Sajjadah Nashins' and 'Pirs'. He does not see the wood for the trees. He fails to see Indian politics—and in particular, Muslim political movements—as being decisively influenced by the vicissitudes of British imperial power and the shifting emphasis of its policies. He fails to see the role of the Punjab Unionist Party, during its heyday in 1920–37, as one not supportive of colonial rule, but of wresting from the British as much power as was possible under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The aim was to uplift the Punjab Muslims by maintaining communal harmony between the 57 per cent Muslims and 43 per cent Sikhs and Hindus, thus making profound educational advancement and economic growth possible, and turning the Punjab into the 'bread-basket' of the subcontinent, as well as one of the foremost provinces of British India, which would make the future West Pakistan viable.

¹ Low-level office of one in charge of part of a district; ² feudatory; ³ white-collar worker or well-dressed man; ⁴ spiritual guide; ⁵ saint or Muslim ascetic attached to a mosque, shrine or religious endowment.

The author fails to relate Punjab politics to the contemporary political situation in which, despite the advances made under the 1935 Act, the British Raj appeared unshakable until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, and all political games, 'Din' and 'Dunya', had to be played in that context. As the war progressed badly for the British and the struggle for independence intensified into the Quit India Movement, the entire political orientation changed to the triangular politics of the Indian National Congress, the All India Muslim League and the exigencies of the British war effort, in which a major role was played by Punjabi soldiers.

After the 1937 elections, owing to the arrogant and shortsighted policies of the Congress in the Muslim minority provinces of the Gangetic belt, and more particularly to British policies during the war years, the All India Muslim League had achieved the status of the sole unchallenged spokesman of the Indian Muslims, and sought, during the post-war negotiations of 1945-46, a post-colonial homeland free from Hindu domination. The All India Congress, representing the majority community, sought an India untrammelled by the major part of a recalcitrant Muslim minority, while the British sought a more manageable, divided India in the post-colonial period. The politics of a waning imperial power combined with the politics of the Muslim minority provinces to create Pakistan and not, as described by Gilmartin, the sudden awakening during 1944-46 to the call of Islam and the *Kingdom of God* of 'Sajjadah Nashins', 'Pirs', 'Safedposh' and Muslim students of the Punjab.

In his concluding chapter, Gilmartin admits that 'the events of 1947 in the Punjab owed much to the broader currents that brought the decline of the British Empire, the rise of the Congress and the growth of the Muslim separatists in other parts of India', yet he still holds the view that 'after the elections of 1946 the creation of Pakistan could not be denied'. It would be more correct to say that the success of the Punjab Muslim League in the 1946 election, rather than being the cause of the creation of Pakistan, was a side-effect of events on the political battlefield in New Delhi.

After thus qualifying one of the main conclusions of the author, it must be recognised that he is most perceptive in his observation that 'for all its outward political trappings and public ideological identification with Pakistan 'nationalism', the power of the Muslim League rested largely on the same base as had the Unionist Party'. He is equally perceptive in his observation that the conflict between the ideal Islam envisaged when espousing the cause of Pakistan before independence, and the power structure 'with its roots in the rural hierarchies that had supported the colonial regime' has not yet been resolved. The main contribution of Gilmartin to the social and political writings about the subcontinent is, therefore, to have identified and documented the problems of the cultural relationships between the state and its people, and between the political structure of the state authority as a legacy of colonial rule and the society's Islamic identity.

AZIM HUSAIN

London

Discovering Islam: making sense of Muslim history and society

Akbar S Ahmed

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1988. 251 pp. £25.00hb

If there is a message to be derived from this invigorating book, it is that Islam as a faith and a culture is too valuable to entrust to blinkered dogmatists and self-proclaimed guardians of the holy writ.

Akbar Ahmed, a senior Pakistani civil servant and scholar, has won international acclaim for his social anthropological work on his Pathan brethren. Having experienced and studied ethnicity in his own homeland and in other climes, he firmly believes that cultural diversity among Muslim peoples and races is a source of strength, for it draws life from a common religious stem. He sees attempts to straiten these different societies into an orthodox, arbitrarily defined shape, patterned on a model lacking local roots—whether by force of arms or through regimented clerical pressures— as serving only to weaken Islamic civilisation itself, leaving it unsusceptible to the bracing winds of modern science and secular belief.

Dr Ahmed is deeply conscious that Islam faces an almost unprecedented time of troubles. The spectre of Muslim disunity and sectarian strife cannot be camouflaged by strident appeals to scriptural dogma or by explosive political rages, led or manipulated by clerical zealots and their allies, all of whom are united by an overriding fear of change which they perceive as a threat to their power and entrenched authority. In Pakistan, political and social repression, it is implied, has brought unnecessary pain and suffering to the search for a national identity; it has bred a climate of drab conformity and intellectual sterility, from which the nation's brightest talents have fled to flower in foreign fields.

Dr Ahmed reminds us how Islam withstood past challenges from such diverse creeds as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and the paganism of Greece, and prospered. Islamic mathematics, science, historical writing and much else boasted a string of illustrious names such as Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Sina, and Al Beruni. Islam borrowed from other civilisations gifts to which it added the fruits of its own genius. This corpus of thought, discovery and invention was later to fertilise an intellectually impoverished Europe emerging slowly from its dark ages, and to become part of an unfolding universal spirit of critical inquiry. Dr Ahmed, like the poet-philosopher Iqbal before him, stresses that the borrowings were selective, that Islam remained true to its deepest self throughout.

In South Asia, about which Dr Ahmed writes with the greatest passion and knowledge, Islam has oscillated between two broad traditions. The first was personified by the austere and orthodox Sunni Mughal Aurangzeb; the second by his eclectic Sufi-oriented brother, Dara Shikoh, whom he defeated in the succession for the imperial throne, and executed. In our times, these contradictory strands, says the author, were represented on the one hand by General Zia ul-Haq and Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi, founder of Pakistan's fundamentalist Jama'at-i-Islami, and on the other by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Possibly, Bhutto in his unorthodox worship was a pale reflection of Dara; but thankfully the comparison has been taken no further, for the superior grain in Dara's character was conspicuously absent in Bhutto.

Among the modern Muslim figures in the subcontinent, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Mohammed Ali Jinnah principally, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to a lesser extent,

attempted to open up a new world for their community where the Islamic Revelation was released from literalism, re-explored and harmonised with Western discoveries and knowledge in a process of creative renewal.

Akbar Ahmed's theme would have been enriched by a discussion of Sir Syed's place in Muslim thought and, proceeding from there, from an examination of why the efforts of Islamic reformers from Dara Shikoh onward have ended in defeat.

Dr Ahmed's incisive chapter on Islam in southern India is confined to Hyderabad whose Urdu court culture was a northern Mughal transplant which shows signs of withering under the weight of inhospitable contemporary pressures. Hyderabad Muslims, he observes, are generally mired in self-pity and nostalgia for a privileged past, an affliction brought about by what he calls the 'Andalus syndrome': the fear of extinction to which Muslims in Andalusia in the Iberian peninsula were condemned some five hundred years ago.

Akbar Ahmed has kept his lamp burning during dark and difficult times in his country and fashioned the tools of his intellectual trade in its glow. How easy it would have been to turn his back on Pakistan and follow the road of so many distinguished Pakistanis to fame and fortune abroad. He is to be admired for his integrity and courage.

PREMEN ADDY

London

Socialism and Underdevelopment

Ken Post and Phil Wright

London/New York: Routledge, 1989, 204pp, £25.00hb £9.95pb

Socialism and Underdevelopment is the seventh title to appear in the series, 'Development and Underdevelopment', edited by Ray Bromley and Gavin Kitching. The series as a whole concerns a large interdisciplinary and rapidly changing area of intellectual enquiry and policy adaptations. Its aim is the publication of readable introductory texts for students, practitioners and specialists on important issues in development studies. Previous titles in the series have addressed a wide range of complex developmental concerns such as regional policy, the internalisation of capital, policy experiments and nationalism and industrialisation. Judging by the volumes already published, the series should provide a stimulating assessment and novel interpretations of some of the most fundamental problems and policy adaptations facing the developing countries.

The principal concern of the book under review is to unravel the tendential 'laws of motion' of state socialist societies, and consequently also what the authors call 'the problematic of socialism and underdevelopment'. The basis for this concern is the fundamental feature of the Marxist-Leninist version of socialism itself, namely that ever since 1917 successful revolutions claiming socialist inspirations have always occurred on the underdeveloped periphery of capitalism (Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America), never at the centre (Western Europe, North America), as Marx and Engels envisaged. In order to elaborate explanations the authors carefully guide us through a maze of concepts, theoretical formulations and classical as well as current literature. Their grappling with complex economic and political science formulations is

impressive, and the syntheses presented are admirable. The discussion is illustrated by examples drawn from a cross-section of state socialist societies: Cuba, Nicaragua, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union. The arguments are well developed and clearly presented in a balanced way. Despite its intellectual weight, the absence of self-descriptive jargon makes this volume very readable.

The final chapter of the book is particularly important in the context of current developments in state socialist societies, particularly in the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Mozambique and Hungary. It examines the viability of socialism in the era of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and its immediate future. It is hard to disagree with the authors' views that the negative features of state socialist societies can be traced back to the application of faulty or misconceived socialist ideology in conditions of underdevelopment. The current emphasis of some of the leaders of socialist countries on the introduction of market forces is not necessarily tantamount to the restoration of capitalism. Post and Wright capture the dilemma succinctly: 'The state versus the market is not therefore equivalent to socialism versus capitalism, and the increasing importance of the market in state socialist societies does not signify a victory for capitalism.' At another level, many leaders and supporters of socialist regimes (though till recently this could be said only about their opponents) are of course increasingly aware of the close link between economic liberalisation and individual liberties, and recognise that the latter are indispensable to a flourishing socialist civil society. The immediate future of state socialism lies in successful restructuring along these lines.

WIGDAN SZAIKOWSKI

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Third World Politics: a comparative introduction

Paul Cammack, David Poole and William Tordoff

London: Macmillan. 1988. 320pp. £25.00hb/£7.95pb

The authors of *Third World Politics* are to be congratulated for writing a splendid introductory text for undergraduate students that avoids over-simplification, excessive case-study empiricism and unduly abstract and fundamentally unusable comparative theory. Almost thirty years on from the classic exposition by Almond and Coleman, *The Politics of Developing Areas* (1960), comes a volume which attempts to fill a gap between the modernisation perspective which they espoused and the dependency theory that arose as its critique. The new work is mindful of the shortcomings of both approaches, recognising that Western industrial society introduced a progressive impetus in the Third World as well as the conservative alliances that could block such progress, and that continuing profound inequalities within the world economy make the task of development extremely difficult.

The book is realistic in its expectations of both the value and limitations of the comparative approach. The material covers Africa, Latin America and the Middle East but not Asia, placing due emphasis upon the determining factors of social structure and the historical and international contexts. A central thesis is that the differences in political experience can be understood by differences in the method, extent and timing of Western capitalist expansion, coupled with the complex variety of local responses.

REFERENCE

Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations

Edited by E Ellis Cashmore

London: Routledge, 1988 (second edition). 325pp. £9.95pb

The *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations* is an accessible reference work which provides background and introductory information on political movements and activists (both racist and anti-racist), theories and ideologies of race and racial disadvantage, institutions, government policy and judicial decisions, historical phases and events. Each section ends with an annotated bibliography. The institutional focus of the book is largely upon North America and Western Europe (it is its handling of the figures and institutions of these regions which is most skilful), although many individual sections and the bulk of its analysis is of international significance.

The Dictionary is firmly committed to anti-racism. Its authors attempt to appraise both the theories of the origins of racism and the various movements which have striven to end such oppression. Its achievements are, however, uneven. In particular, its comments of socio-biology are controversial, running counter to the prevailing view that the reduction of social difference to genetic origins has profoundly racist and sexist implications. Its attempt to reach conclusions about the origins of nationalism is also marred by the failure to distinguish between the nationalisms of imperialist and oppressed nations.

Cashmore's grand aim of producing workable concepts and definitions amid the theoretical infighting within the discipline of race relations may not be attainable without the achievement of political and theoretical consensus. He has, however, managed to achieve a degree of clarity without too simplistic a reduction of the arguments.

Minority Rights Group Reports

London: MRG. £1.80pb*

The Kurds by David McDowell (1985, updated 1987) traces the origins of Kurdish nationalism in the late nineteenth century, through the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and oppression at the hands of modern Central Asian states. It takes into account the internal divisions of Kurdish society and the mutual influence of the Kurdish struggle and international events, such as the Iran-Iraq war.

Chad: conflict or conciliation? by Kaye Whiteman (1988) locates the origins of the conflict that has continued unabated since independence in 1960 in the colonial carve-up of Africa, which placed disparate peoples in one land-locked, resource-poor territory and subjected them to rival colonial claims. Whiteman follows the course of the civil war from 1979 to Hissène Habré's presidency and the Libyan-Chad war, and assesses the fragile potential for unity under the national government.

The Southern Sudan by Douglas H Johnson (1988) follows introductory sections with a full discussion of the second civil war, which began in 1980, explaining the military and political alliances and demands in terms of the combination of a shift towards Islamic government in Khartoum, regional border and development issues, and exploitation of mineral resources. Written before the coup in July 1989, it follows the war from the fall of Numeiri to the negotiations in early 1988 and ends by considering the possibility of another military coup.

Fiji by Hugh Tinker, Naresha Duraiswamy, Yash Ghai and Martin Ennals (1987), a collection of four articles, examines the colonial legacy of a racially divided society, the achievement of racial cooperation reflected in the formation of the multi-racial Labour Party (1985), the 'return' of ethnicity in the 1987 coup and possible solutions to the crisis.

* A *World Directory of Minorities* is to be published in 1989 by MRG and Longman's Publishers. Based on pre-existing MRG reports as well as specially commissioned articles, the directory will contain over 150 entries covering 11 regions.

There were many more Sinhalese votes to be had by being extreme than there were Tamil votes to be had by being moderate. Likewise, no Sinhalese party had very much to offer Tamil candidates to help them win marginal seats. For the Tamils, there were no such marginal seats: Tamil candidates either won overwhelmingly, or they did not win at all. With constituencies and electoral rules structured as Sri Lanka's were until 1978, inter-ethnic coalitions based on the exchange of votes between the partners—the most durable and important kind of inter-ethnic coalition—were highly improbable and indeed, with the one short-lived and partial exception referred to earlier, did not come into being.

Malaysia's heterogeneous constituencies made ethnic calculations more complex. In many constituencies, Chinese voters could punish Malay extremists and reward moderates. There were not always more Malay votes to be gained than Chinese votes to be lost by taking extreme positions. By the same token, Chinese and Malay parties could exchange votes profitably at the constituency level. Where there were more Malays than Chinese, a Chinese party could urge its supporters to vote for a friendly Malay candidate, and vice versa when there were more Chinese than Malays. Parties might still evolve along wholly ethnic lines, but—especially if there were more than one party per ethnic group—there would be countervailing incentives fostering inter-ethnic coalition. Such incentives are now also built into Sri Lankan electoral arrangements, especially in presidential elections, where the whole country is one large heterogeneous constituency and where Sinhalese divisions make it likely that the election will be decided on second preferences, including Tamil second preferences. But in the formative period of Sinhalese exclusiveness and Tamil separatism, all the incentives worked the other way.

The third difference between Sri Lanka and Malaysia, which relates closely to the first two, is that a permanent multi-ethnic coalition was established in Malaysia before independence, which occupied the centre of the ethnic spectrum. Where the main Sinhalese parties were driven by electoral logic to espouse ethnically exclusionary positions, the leading Malay party found itself impelled by coalition logic to act with moderation and compromise, although without altogether foreclosing extreme claims. The Malaysian Chinese, who at independence had neither assured citizenship nor full acceptance in the country, did not have their presence in the country delegitimised and devalued, as the Sri Lankan Tamils did.